# Twelve-Note Music as Music: an Essay in Two Parts

Earle, Benjamin

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**Twelve-note Music as Music**

**An Essay in Two Parts**

## Part One: Theory

Can it make sense to call music unmusical? The complaint – 'It isn't music!' – has often been heard. If this is more than a contradiction in terms, it presumably expresses a judgement that the music in question should be described differently: as 'noise', perhaps. Even to raise this issue is to court accusations of conservatism. Prescriptive use of the word 'musical' has been aggravating composers for over a century. Music will only win its freedom when it ceases to be 'musical', declared Ferruccio Busoni in 1907. For him, the usage was tautologous. 'Musical is: that which sounds in rhythms and intervals', he wrote. The noise compositions of the futurists were still a few years off. Indeed, Busoni had as his target a more subtle distinction. In German, he explains, 'musikalisch' denotes a listener particularly discriminating in respect of music's technical construction. 'Unmusikalisch' refers to composers or compositions reckoned technically lacking.[1]

Passing from the dawn of musical modernism to postmodernism, we find – in place of Busoni's Germans – the British philosopher Roger Scruton. Like Busoni's 'unmusikalisch', Scruton's contrast between 'sound' and 'tone' opens up a domain that is neither 'musical' nor 'noisy'. Scruton refers on the one hand to discrete sounds, which though they follow one another in sequence, appear unconnected one to the next; on the other to sounds heard to possess some kind of inner force or 'tone', such that they appear to be mutually responsive. The distinction is unexceptionable. It becomes problematic insofar as Scruton associates music exclusively with tone. He has difficulties with post-tonal repertory in general. And when he encounters compositions in which tone appears to have been thoroughly disaggregated into its components, he is at a loss. In the twelve-note melodies of Alban Berg, identities of rhythmical shape 'can make one set of pitches into the answering phrase required by almost any other'. But

> when the rhythmical foreground is dissolved – as in the serialized rhythms of Luigi Nono – the result is a kind of punctilious shapelessness in which, in the absence of tonality, we search in vain for musical relations.[2]

Nono's twelve-note music is evidently unmusical.

Let us look more closely. The rhythms of the seventh movement of Nono's cantata *Il canto sospeso* (1955–6) are indeed serialized, as are the pitch classes (but not their registration). Example 1a gives bars 457–61 as three-part counterpoint, without instrumentation, but including dynamics (restricted

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[1] Ferruccio Busoni, 'Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music', trans. Theodore Baker, in *Three Classics in the Aesthetic of Music* (New York: Dover, 1962), 86–8 (translation modified).

[2] Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19–20, 39.

to *ppp*, *p* and *mf*, but not serialized).[3] Heard as they stand in Ex. 1a (especially played back via the music-typesetting software used to create it), these bars confirm Scruton's critique. The pitches merely follow one another; they are not mutually responsive. But in Nono's realization (see Example 1b), the effect is very different. Though Scruton sets tone-colour 'to one side, as a secondary characteristic of the musical object',[4] it is tone-colour in Ex. 1b – along with a specifically non-musical element, the verbal text – that brings the notes to life. The $g\natural^1$ on '-glia' at the end of bar 458 completes the setting of 'figlia' begun at the start of the bar: it is not an atomized pitch, but descends from the $g\sharp^1$, which in turn is linked to the previous $e^2$. Similarly, the falling fifth at 'Liubka' (with its Puccini-style sudden hush for the high $a^2$) is precisely heard to fall. The $a^2$ and $d^2$ respond to each other; they do not merely follow in sequence.

Scruton appears wrong to deny the existence of 'musical relations' in Nono. More importantly, it does not cross his mind that the contrast between 'sound' and 'tone' might in fact be meaningful in itself. Scruton wishes to provoke, notably in his judgement that 'until we have furnished ourselves with an account of our central instances of the art', the question of 'whether this or that modernist or postmodernist experiment is a work of music is empty'.[5] Yet from the perspective to be developed here, works of musical modernism will indeed be taken to be best understood in the light of their relations to historical precedents, with regard to which Scruton's sound/tone distinction names an essential characteristic.

It is not only the verbal text that lends the seventh movement of *Il canto sospeso* its celebrated poignancy.[6] But when Massimo Mila praised the cantata for its 'capacity to institute a coherent continuity between one note and another', he surely did not mean to imply that a *cantabile* ran from the first bar to the last. As Nono's pupil Helmut Lachenmann suggests, the linearity of the solo soprano's contributions in the seventh movement stands in contrast to the 'punctual structure of dispersed lines' that surrounds it.[7] We hear isolated moments of continuity, appropriately suggestive of subjectivity on the point of evanescence. Again this is to accept one of Scruton's principal claims: that in 'the world of sound', we 'discover [...] through music, the very life that is ours'.[8] The point is

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[3] For more details, see Carola Nielinger, '"The Song Unsung": Luigi Nono's *Il canto sospeso*', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 131/1 (2006), 125–9.

[4] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*, 78.

[5] *Ibid.*, 17.

[6] Nono sets texts by condemned resistance fighters of the Second World War, published in Piero Malvezzi and Giovannio Pirelli (eds.), *Lettere di condannati a morte della resistenza europea* (Turin: Einaudi, 1954). That of the seventh movement reads, in full: 'Addio mamma, tua figlia Liubka se ne va nell'umida terra' ('Farewell, Mother, your daughter Liubka is going into the damp earth').

[7] Massimo Mila, 'La linea Nono', *La rassegna musicale*, 30/4 (1960), 309; Angela Ida De Benedictis and Ulrich Mosch (eds.), *Alla ricerca di luce e chiarezza. L'epistolario Helmut Lachenmann – Luigi Nono (1957–1990)* (Florence: Olschki, 2012), 253.

[8] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*, 13–14.

that in Nono this discovery is primarily negative. In the words of Theodor Adorno, Ex. 1b gives us a life that 'does not live'.[9]

Nono's work is characteristic of late modernism in this regard. The notion of a music that places tone in expressive relation to sound is hardly unique to *Il canto sospeso*. Indeed, if Scruton's equation of music with tone stands for the restricted musicality deplored by Busoni, then Nono's placing of tone in relation to sound may be representative of musical modernism in general. As Jean-François Lyotard puts it,

> When Cézanne picks up his paint-brush, what is at stake in painting is put into question; when Schönberg sits down at his piano, what is at stake in music; when Joyce grabs hold of his pen, what is at stake in literature.

In modernism, Lyotard suggests, the goal of art is no longer that of '"pleasing" through the beautiful', but of '"pleasing/displeasing" through the sublime'. A composition will be on the right track 'if it obliges the addressee to ask about what it consists in'.[10] The claim that a work of twelve-note music is musical – that it is in fact music – would thus inherently put into question what is meant by these terms.

## I

What they come down to is social class. Such is the conclusion to be drawn from the work of one writer particularly keen to bandy about a notion of the musical, the British critic Hans Keller. If commentators on music are unable to differentiate between analysis and description, Keller declares, this is a function of 'the basic issue [...] of musicality *versus* unmusicality in our time'. 'In Mozart's time, [...] music lovers were musical.' But today, 'a large proportion of our own music lovers' are unmusical, such that the ability to distinguish between description (tautological) and analysis (illuminating) is beyond them.[11] Musicality is an instinctive, emotional understanding. And to acquire it one has to 'grow up with, and into music', and do so 'in the right social context'. Some today have evidently been lucky enough to spend their formative years in adequately cultured environments. But '[t]he days are long past [...] when people were only open to what, potentially, they could understand'. In a society catered to by mass media, stupid, talentless people (Keller's adjectives) no longer know their place. Neither they nor their populist masters will recognize 'the fact that all men are not equal'.[12]

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[9] Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London and New York: Verso, 1974), 19.

[10] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 139.

[11] Hans Keller, 'Description, Analysis and Criticism: A Differential Diagnosis', *Soundings*, 6 (1977), 112–14.

[12] Ibid., 112–13, 115–16.

Keller writes from a position of unabashed elitism. Yet one cannot dismiss his thought as mere ideology. When Scruton points out that a musical culture exists 'by virtue of the surplus which creates the conditions of leisure', and that 'the development of our music [...] depended [...] on the bourgeois', he is not wrong either.[13] Let us look one last time at Ex. 1b. On what kind of knowledge does the assertion depend that sections of this music possess 'tone', or (which would seem to come to the same thing) a measure of subjective expressivity? Is this the kind of knowledge imparted in university analysis seminars? The meaningfulness of Nono's music would appear to depend on the sort of recognition detailed above. Yet as Scruton suggests, its ground is a knowledge expressed precisely 'in acts of recognition', and 'not in theories'.[14]

Pierre Bourdieu explains how students acquire cultural capital in two modes: the domestic as well as the scholastic. It is not just that the self-assured bourgeois listener, who has been immersed in a high-cultural atmosphere at home since early childhood, will tend to feel more confident with difficult modernist works than the listener of working-class or petit-bourgeois origins, who is less likely to have been furnished with such a cultural head-start, and being thus belatedly dependent on what is taught at school, will have 'more "classical", safer cultural investments'.[15] As Bourdieu points out, a domestically acquired cultural capital in relation to music engenders a distinctive attitude. His example is that of Roland Barthes, who assures us that the singing of his favourite Charles Panzéra was 'exclusively bourgeois [...] i.e., in no way petit-bourgeois'. The presence of 'grain' in Panzéra's voice – a trace of the materiality of the French language in vocal production – testifies to the fact that an amateur singer of the *mélodies* of Fauré or Duparc might aspire to perform them too. By contrast, the 'grain'-less voice of the technically irreproachable Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau keeps amateurs at an unbridgeable distance. Fischer-Dieskau suits listeners who merely listen. His 'art [...] corresponds perfectly to the requirements of an *average* culture', which reduces music to 'what is said of it, predicatively, by the Academy, by Criticism, by Opinion'. It is a performance style suited to the primarily scholastic mode of cultural acquisition typical of those lacking a bourgeois formation.[16]

The above account of Ex. 1b, which leaves to one side the pedagogically sanctioned route of note-counting in favour of observations about aspects of Nono's work not notated in the score, would seem fatally class-marked, displaying not just a confidence in handling difficult repertory but also a presumed insider's knowledge of how the music 'goes'. Similarly, when Adorno brandishes a notion of the musical, in a posthumous note from 1945, class distinctions would seem clearly in play. Adorno takes issue with Busoni. The violinist who praised as 'so musical' one of the Italian's compositions was no fool:

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[13] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*, 466.

[14] *Ibid.*, 18.

[15] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 65.

[16] Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 273, 262; Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 76.

> There is, as it were independently of the musical quality, such a thing as speaking the language of music or not. Bad composers such as Tchaikovsky, Puccini or Rachmaninov speak it – Elgar or Sibelius do not.[17]

Adorno here criticizes a specifically British taste. Praise for Sibelius's incompetent music amounts to a destruction of 'the criteria of musical quality that have endured from Bach to Schoenberg'.[18] If the British like Sibelius, it is because they espouse a 'Western' aesthetic, which assesses music 'according to the consistent exchange principle, which values any entity in terms of another [*als ein Für anderes*]'. That the work of Sibelius or Elgar is threadbare or feeble is of no concern, since unlike Central European listeners, the British are not interested in art for its own sake.[19] Adorno may recognize the ideological character of the 'Central European' position, its 'fetishism of [...] a man-made social product',[20] but from the perspective of class, he simply transfers a distinction normally regarded as operating within a single nation onto the relationship between nations. The 'aesthetic disposition', an ability to concentrate on matters of form alone, Bourdieu observes, 'presupposes the distance from the world [...] which is the basis of the bourgeois experience'.[21] If this is the prerogative of 'Central European' listeners, then 'Western' listeners are reduced to petty-bourgeois status, unable properly to separate world and work.

But what does Adorno mean by 'speaking the language of music'? Here, *pace* Scruton, we may find a means to theorise 'tone'; or at least, to identify some modes of musical 'movement'. Adorno once drew attention to bars 87–94 from the first movement of Brahms's Fourth Symphony (1884–5), as they sound in the 1951 recording by Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra.

> In an extraordinarily lyrical eight-bar passage in B major a wind antecedent contrasts with a consequent on the strings. The latter naturally has a richer sound than the cooler wind antecedent. However, Toscanini hurls himself with such enthusiasm onto the strings that the consequent ceases to be heard as the half-theme, the response, that it is in Brahms's work. Instead, thanks to its exaggerated and oversweet tone, it is turned into the main event and reduces the exposition of the theme to a secondary issue, thereby throwing the entire formal pattern out of kilter.[22]

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[17] Theodor W. Adorno, *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction: Notes, a Draft and Two Schemata*, ed. Henri Lonitz, trans. Wieland Hoban (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 158.

[18] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Gloss on Sibelius', trans. Susan H. Gillespie, in Daniel M. Grimley (ed.), *Jean Sibelius and his World* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 336.

[19] Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1976), 172–3 (translation modified).

[20] *Ibid.*, 173.

[21] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 54.

[22] Theodor W. Adorno, *Sound Figures*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 46.

The philosopher does not merely dislike what Toscanini makes of these bars. He thinks the conductor's reading objectively wrong. Toscanini demonstrates a lack of feeling for the syntax of Brahms's work: his performance is unmusical. Adorno goes on to wonder whether the Italian 'really had any understanding of phrasing at all', and points out further instances of his failure to grasp the 'musical sense' of various passages, or more strongly, to 'do justice to the objective process of composition'.[23]

## II

Analysts of post-tonal music would do well to ponder these ideas. Adorno's conception of the linguistic character of music is a theory of the phrase, an understanding of music as articulated at the kind of medium scale generally neglected by analysts of this repertory. Scruton furnishes a telling example. It is only on the basis of his attenuated view of musical syntax as 'a context-dependent *affinity* between tones' that he can justifiably complain, in respect to Example 2, of 'each bar leading smoothly into its successor, yet the whole thing [being] a kind of nonsense'. For Scruton, bars 40–2 from the second movement of Hindemith's Concerto for Trumpet, Bassoon and Strings (1949–52) illustrate a musical parallel to the 'intransitivity' of verbal syntax:

> A word may be acceptably joined to its successor, and the successor to *its* successor, and yet the result be ill-formed. For example, 'fish eat' is acceptable; so is 'eat three', and so is 'three ideas': but 'fish eat three ideas' is not an acceptable sentence of English.[24]

With regard to Ex. 2, something closer to the opposite of this would be more accurate. For at the level of the phrase, Hindemith's music moves conventionally. It is the relation of one bar to the next, or one pitch to the next, that is more problematic.

Hindemith's melodic line is ungainly. And while one may analyse the opening and closing harmonies of bars 40–6 in terms of 'pillar chords' in F♯ major, between these (particularly at bars 43–5) 'the harmonic construction [...] can be somewhat looser', as David Neumeyer euphemistically puts it.[25] Yet Hindemith's 'wrong notes' are part and parcel of his music's mildly parodic waltz character. Scruton appears oblivious to this aspect of the extract. More significantly, his choice to cite only bars 40–2 means that he cannot show how they form part of a larger structure. The way in which bar 41 answers bar 40 is unmistakable, and presumably accounts for Scruton's 'each bar leading smoothly into its successor'. But to grasp the musical sense of bars 40–6, we need first to take account of bars 32–9, a Schoenbergian sentence.[26] A look at the melodic line will suffice. At bar 34, the opening two-bar unit is set to repeat, but (with possibly humorous intent) the first violins get stuck on the

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[23] *Ibid.*, 50–1.

[24] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*, 186, 179.

[25] David Neumeyer, *The Music of Paul Hindemith* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 42.

[26] See Arnold Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, ed. Gerald Strang and Leonard Stein (London and Boston: Faber, 1967).

material of bar 32, before Hindemith moves to a more developmental three-bar continuation at bars 36–8, followed by a cadence in bar 39 (based once again on the material of bar 32). With the repetition of bars 32–9 at bars 40–6, various details of scoring, dynamics, registration and harmony are changed. The second repetition of the phrase's opening bar, due in bar 43 as a parallel to bar 35, does not reappear: hence the seven-bar phrase. But the point is that bars 40–6 are heard precisely as a (varied) repetition.

For Adorno, stylistically conservative music like this could only have confirmed Hindemith's 'petit bourgeois' social character.[27] Nevertheless, the analysis sketched above may be taken as moving towards the 'objective' sense of this extract. The word is meant, of course, to raise eyebrows. For Julian Horton,

> [t]he fact that the cognitive strategies underpinning perception may be rooted in tonal paradigms tells us something about the cultural pervasiveness of those paradigms, but very little about the objective basis of musical perception. We should not, in other words, confuse cultural memory with cognitive objectivity; to do so is to succumb to a kind of musical false consciousness. Such arguments tend to mistake subjective analytical engagements for objective judgemental criteria.

To make the Adornian judgement of a piece's 'objective incomprehensibility' – one evidently not tenable in respect of Ex. 2 – is to fall into error, Horton claims, unless the reading can be accepted as 'universally true'.[28] Adorno himself would have smiled. As he explains, 'the reproach that a statement is "too subjective"' is standard in such cases. 'If this is brought to bear', he continues, 'with an indignation in which rings the furious harmony of all reasonable people, one has grounds, for a few seconds, to feel self-satisfied'.[29] For Horton, an objective statement is one uncoloured by subjective idiosyncrasy; it may thus be expected to receive universal assent. But for Adorno it is a feature of the contemporary world that '[t]he notions of subjective and objective have been completely reversed':

> Objective means the non-controversial aspect of things, their unquestioned impression, the façade made up of classified data, that is, the subjective; and they call subjective anything which breaches that façade, engages the specific experience of a matter, casts off all ready-made judgements and substitutes relatedness to the object for the majority consensus of those who do not even look at it, let alone think about it – that is the objective.[30]

Yet more snobbery, one might retort. Adorno's position is certainly high-handed. In philosophical language, it is 'transcendental'. As Brian O'Connor explains, the negative dialectic involves the claim that a philosophy that 'denies or excludes any of the conditions identified [by Adorno] as the

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[27] Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, 20 vols. (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1970–86), xvii, 239–46.

[28] Julian Horton, 'Schoenberg and the "Moment of German Music"', *Music Analysis*, 24/1–2 (2005), 256.

[29] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 69.

[30] *Ibid.*, 69–70.

conditions for the possibility of experience' is doomed to incoherence.[31] Genuine experience, the recuperation of which may be taken as the central aim of Adorno's life work, is structured as 'mediation'. It is a reciprocal, dynamic yet 'indetermining' relation between subject and object.[32] Famously, the philosopher insists on the 'primacy of the object', the claim that objects in general cannot be fully subsumed under concepts. At the same time, he is clear that the experiencing subject is not merely passive. An object may be determinative, 'but its determination is articulated by the subject'.[33] Genuine experience involves openness to the necessity of conceptual adjustment, awareness of the inadequacy of our concepts in relation to reality. Objective knowledge is indeed possible, but 'this [...] will be a nontotalistic knowledge that excludes the assumption that knowledge means total encapsulation by the subject of the object'.[34]

Adorno sets himself on a collision course with 'positivistic' modern rationality, which he considers 'isomorphic with the economic structures of [late capitalist] society'.[35] The kind of writing that takes objectivity to equate to success in classification remains subjective inasmuch as it is involved in the business of fitting objects to schemas rather than attending to their particularity. By the same token, complaints about the subjective character of what Adorno would regard as objective judgements miss the point that genuine experience has a mediatory structure. That an element of subjectivity is involved in genuine aesthetic judgement by no means implies relativism:

> Anyone who, drawing on the strength of his precise reaction to a work of art, has ever subjected himself in earnest to its discipline, to its immanent formal law, the compulsion of its structure, will find that objections to the merely subjective quality of his experience vanish like a pitiful illusion: and every step that he takes, by virtue of his highly subjective innervations, towards the heart of the matter, has incomparably greater force than the comprehensive and fully backed-up analyses of such things as 'style', whose claims to scientific status are made at the expense of such experience.[36]

As O'Connor explains, crucial to Adorno's aesthetics is the idea that, in their responses to artworks, audiences may experience the possibility of a non-instrumental engagement with the world. What Adorno calls 'mimesis' is an affective relation to the other, in which rather than attempting to dominate objects, audiences try to imitate them.[37] Adorno opposed the separation of knowledge and affect. 'Once the last trace of emotion has been eradicated, nothing remains of thought but

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[31] Brian O'Connor, *Adorno's Negative Dialectic: Philosophy and the Possibility of Critical Rationality* (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 2004), 15.

[32] *Ibid.*, 18.

[33] *Ibid.*, 73.

[34] *Ibid.*, 4–5.

[35] *Ibid.*, 3.

[36] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 70.

[37] Brian O'Connor, *Adorno* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 149–54.

absolute tautology', he wrote. The kind of perception that belongs to genuine experience maintains a degree of 'anticipatory desire' based in memory. Rather than tabooing memory as 'unpredictable, unreliable, irrational', Adorno insists that consciousness needs a historical dimension if it is to be able to 'establish that relation between objects that is the irrevocable source of all judgement'.[38]

The three-level model Adorno puts forward in his posthumous notes on performance practice is informed by this same kind of thinking. Objectivity in performance requires subjective intervention. Performers cannot simply play the notes. What is notated (the 'mensural' level) has to become articulated, which is to say, meaningful, or 'gestural' (this is the 'neumic' level), by way of the player's spontaneity. But spontaneity is not enough. The analytical activity which must precede adequate performance needs to be guided by awareness of the unnotated context of interpretation (the level of the 'tone-lingual'). The latter is the presence of history in musical language. To speak the language of music – to be capable of adequate performance (or indeed composition or listening) – is to be able to anticipate what should come next.[39]

Horton's dismissal of cultural memory, and his concomitant attempt to dissociate aesthetic judgement from historical understanding, are at one with his commitment to that most positivistic of music-analytical tools, Allen Forte's theory of pitch-class sets. Faced with Berthold Hoeckner's reading of Schoenberg's *Die Jakobsleiter* (1917–22), impeccably Adornian in its intermingling of constructive and expressive elements (the significance of which resides precisely in their irreducibility one to another), Horton brings things down to the facts. Such considerations 'really reduce to a mixture of thematic cross-referencing and the heterophonic presentation of set-class 6–Z13'.[40]

## III

It is depressing to think that, despite the disciplinary self-criticism of the 1990s, such attitudes are still abroad. Yet it is not hard to locate their source. Here is the late Milton Babbitt speaking 'to a class of college sophomores' about the opening bars of Schoenberg's Fourth Quartet, Op. 37 (1936). He presents the first violin line, stripped of dynamics and articulation (see Example 3a), and comments:

> After stating his first hexachord, which he articulates very obviously, [Schoenberg] then lays out the next six notes of his set in a particular registral distribution which is the only one out of the six factorial (6!) registral distributions which will define a particular relationship between the two hexachords which is fundamental to the structure of the piece, the counterpoint of the piece, the progression of the piece.

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[38] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 122–3.

[39] Adorno, *Towards a Theory*, *passim*.

[40] See Berthold Hoeckner, *Programming the Absolute: Nineteenth-Century German Music and the Hermeneutics of the Moment* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 189–223; Horton, 'Schoenberg and the Moment', 256.

Babbitt indicates this 'registral distribution' (Example 3b), and comments further:

> Do you see what Schoenberg has done? He's made it clear [...] that the second collection is an inversion of the first collection, which is by no means trivial. By so distributing it in register, he's telling you that there's going to be a particular relationship between the hexachord and its inversion which will create aggregates, that is, complete twelve-tone collections in the segments of the two sets will be so used.

For Babbitt, '[T]his is the way Schoenberg's music goes. It's not the only way it goes; it's one of the many ways it goes.'[41] But no, one wants to reply. This is not even one of the ways that Schoenberg's music 'goes'. Babbitt regards his example as an instance of 'directed motion'; namely, 'the idea of constantly intimating where you are going [...] so that when you arrive in certain places in the piece, you have the sense of having gotten someplace which has already been predicted'.[42] When the Fourth Quartet gets to the upbeat to bar 7 (see Example 3c), we are to hear the second violin's transposed inversion of the first violin's pitches in bar 1–6 as prepared by the registral distribution Babbitt has isolated. But again, no. As Robert Pascall has pointed out, bars $6^3$–9 relate to bars 1–$6^2$ as contrasting idea to basic idea within the antecedent of a period.[43] Schoenberg's twelve-note music is music.

It is telling that Arnold Whittall, praising Babbitt's analytical exposition as 'masterly in its musicality', does so in relation to his comments on tonal music: repertory – to employ Babbitt's terminology – in which audiences recognize 'communal' elements from work to work (those of tradition), which are allegedly not present (or insufficiently present) in 'contextual' compositions (atonal and twelve-note), where formal principles hold just for the individual works in question.[44] This is the crux: the point at which anxieties about social snobbery find their focus. In a recent book, Michiel Schuijer not only demonstrates the historical derivation of Forte's method from that of Babbitt; he also argues in favour of pitch-class set theory from a somewhat politicized perspective:

> Whoever rejects its formalism and reductionalism, and finds its language inappropriate, should bear in mind that these aspects serve the purpose of equal opportunity. They enable anybody who is interested, and perseveres to develop an expertise in some of the art music of the post-1900 era and to hand it down to others.

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[41] Milton Babbitt, *Words About Music*, ed. Stephen Dembski and Joseph N. Straus (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), viii, 21, 23.

[42] *Ibid.*, 23.

[43] Robert Pascall, 'Theory and Practice: Schönberg's American Pedagogical Writings and the First Movement of the Fourth String Quartet, op. 37', *Journal of the Arnold Schönberg Center*, 4 (2002), 238.

[44] Arnold Whittall, review of Babbitt, *Words About Music*, in *Music & Letters*, 69/3 (1988), 421; Babbitt, *Words About Music*, 9–10.

Pitch-class set theory is 'equipped to meet the demands of mass education in music, in the sense that it provides a conceptual framework the intrinsic logic of which could be taught to many'.[45] To complain about the unmusicality of this approach, so well suited to the acquisition of cultural capital in its scholastic mode, is merely to enact a class distinction.

But this cannot be the end of the story. Taking issue with an intemperate review of his 1982 book *The Harmonic Organisation of the Rite of Spring* by the British composer Anthony Milner, in which he found himself vilified for his use of a computer, Forte expressed amazement:

> My only response [...] is to speculate upon the habitat of the writer during recent years. In this case it seems likely that he has been dwelling under a very large rock in Outer Mongolia. Surely everyone knows that many people now routinely work with computing devices.

In a footnote, Forte explains that 'although I have written many computer programs in connection with analytical and theoretical studies', the book in question 'was executed entirely by hand methods, save for an electric typewriter and a high-tech electric eraser'.[46] In Schuijer's words, '[t]he influence of the computer on the formulation of research questions and the valuation of research results in the early 1960s can hardly be overestimated.' Forte's analysis of *The Rite of Spring* may have been 'done by hand'; at the same time it should not be forgotten that pitch-class set theory 'was actually devised for computer-aided analysis':

> 'PC set', 'normal' or 'prime form', and 'interval vector' have become household concepts for many music theorists, but in the mid-1960s they met a very specific need: the need for definitions of musical relations that a computer could recognize.[47]

'So what?', one can imagine Forte replying. Already in 1985 he welcomed 'the advent of the microcomputer', envisioning 'a powerful set-complex analyser with artificial intelligence aspects'.[48] The basis to the kind of objection made by Milner needs to be carefully spelled out.

Nicholas Cook has invoked the experience of listening 'to a synthesized performance of Chopin's E minor Prelude, in which every note is equally long and equally loud'. As Cook explains, the effect of the synthesizer's performance would be to make us negatively aware of how much the effect of a good performance relies on factors of 'temporal and dynamic shaping' that are not notated in the score. In an earlier account of this same example, the synthesizer was a Martian. Its hypothetical present-day audience, Cook suggested, 'would be inclined to think of someone who played Chopin's music in this manner, as being not so much unmusical as mentally deranged'.[49]

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[45] Michiel Schuijer, *Analyzing Atonal Music: Pitch-Class Set Theory and Its Contexts* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 277–8. For the roots of pitch-class set theory in Babbitt's 'source set', see pp. 95–6.

[46] Allen Forte, 'Pitch-Class Set Analysis Today', *Music Analysis*, 4/1–2 (1985), 46, 58n42.

[47] Schuijer, *Analyzing Atonal Music*, 96n15, 237, 248.

[48] Forte, 'Pitch-Class Set Analysis Today', 55–6.

[49] Nicholas Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 61; Nicholas Cook, *Music, Imagination and Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 122.

Consider now a class of undergraduates learning to analyse post-tonal music. For all the democratic credentials of pitch-class set theory, in this environment the distinction between domestic and scholastic acquisition of cultural capital may have little purchase. Most, if not all, of these students will be (or have been) instrumentalists or vocalists, studying with teachers who will be trying (or have tried) to cultivate in them a sense of where the unnotated factors observed by Cook would be appropriately employed. The ability to do this well, Cook suggests, 'is a major part of what being a good pianist means'.[50] It is what musicians in the Western tradition call 'musicality'. So the question to Babbitt, Forte and their disciples is: Why, when we expect our students to play music – including that of the Second Viennese School – like human beings, do we ask them to analyse its post-tonal manifestations as if they were Martians? Why not encourage them to bring their musical experience to the exercise?

Schuijer is no uncritical partisan. He freely admits the theory's positivistic basis and argumentative circularity.[51] But against the complaint that one cannot hear pitch-class relations, that they have no bearing on musical experience, he mounts a determined defence. The crucial issue, of course, is segmentation. In the absence of criteria for the 'verification' of pitch-class sets, analysts have tended to employ their musical intuition. Yet when pitch-class set analysis carried out in this manner is apparently successful, and a previously unsuspected relation of equivalence is discovered between what, from a 'musical' perspective, would seem two self-evidently isolatable units, Schuijer remains unconvinced. 'Theorists may have taken it for granted that there is a correlation between PC equivalence and aural similarity', he writes. 'However, this correlation is questionable.' 'Intuitive' or 'hand-made' segmentation, while appearing as a humanizing correction to the theory, stands in tension with the 'scientific spirit' in which it was conceived. To suggest that listeners ought to recognize that their intuitive grasp of the coherence of certain works of music rests on what are for them as yet undiscovered pitch-class set relations may be to misunderstand the project entirely. For why should a theory be based on listeners' expectations? 'PC set theory is not a theory of music cognition [...] As a consequence it should not be judged from this viewpoint.'[52]

Forte's labels may sometimes have a certain heuristic usefulness, but insofar as we are concerned with twelve-note music as music, pitch-class set theory should detain us no further. Isolating and comparing elements independently of the 'movement' expressed by a composition, Scruton observes, the theory analyses not *music*, but *sounds*.[53] But how shall we proceed instead? Scruton, for one, is an unregenerate tonalist, though what he means by 'tonality' can appear obscure, since the term is explicitly able to encompass Luigi Dallapiccola's twelve-note opera *Il prigioniero* (Florence, 1950), 'whose tonal order is constituted entirely on the surface and in defiance of the traditional laws of harmony'. It turns out that, for Scruton, 'tonality' is synonymous with musical sense. 'Tonality' permits us to hear music as music: 'as moving with the force and logic of gestures

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[50] Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, 61.

[51] Schuijer, *Analyzing Atonal Music*, 250, 89, 270.

[52] *Ibid.*, 123, 24, 269.

[53] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*, 415.

which are mutually aware and mutually accommodating'. As the example of *Il prigioniero* suggests, atonal music may also be 'tonal'.[54]

Scruton finds Schoenberg's twelve-note music more problematic. Of the Violin Concerto, Op. 36 (1934–6), he insists that '[w]hen we hear *movement* in atonal music, it is precisely *not* the serial ordering that we are hearing.' That he finds it necessary to make such an elementary observation speaks volumes about the manner in which this repertory has tended to be discussed in English. But just how is Schoenberg's twelve-note music musical? It is striking how rarely this question has been asked.[55] For Scruton, the opening of the Concerto 'moves through tonal space with [...] the logic of a tune, meditating on neighbouring semitones'. Attending to this music as music, the listener 'will be relying on the tonal implications of the ascending and descending semitone – the perceived character of *leaning* that these intervals derive from the tradition of tonal harmony'.[56] The analytical problem here is akin to that encountered above in respect to Hindemith. Ironically, it is shared with those US theorists of twelve-note music against whom Scruton takes himself to be arguing. As Christopher Wintle explains, 'form and phrase in Second Viennese School music' is 'a topic that never really crossed the Atlantic when it mattered.' The term 'phrase' is one Babbitt refuses to employ.[57]

## IV

It is pitiful to have to observe that, despite the rivers of ink since spilt over this repertory, one of the most musical accounts in English of Schoenberg's twelve-note music remains the analyses of passages from the Piano Concerto, Op. 42 (1942), published by Heinrich Jalowetz seventy years ago. Having stressed the overriding importance of '[t]he melodic element' as 'the basic force' of Schoenberg's music, Jalowetz proceeds to phrase analyses of bars 1–39 and 264–85, the openings of the first and third movements. In the case of the latter, Jalowetz tells us, 'directly audible [...] interrelations [...] arise from the operation of the primary laws inherent in the language of music.' This repertory may be discussed 'according to methods that may be regarded as universally valid'.[58]

Few today would have such confidence. As Henry Klumpenhouwer observes, among the features of 'Adorno-style analytical studies many music theorists will find troubling' is an evasion of 'any

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[54] *Ibid.*, 271–2.

[55] Whittall, in a recent introductory text, at least raises the issue. Yet his section headings, 'Schoenberg as music' and 'Serialism as music', are deceptive, the discussion in both cases swiftly retreating from the concrete to the abstract. See Arnold Whittall, *Serialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 32–6.

[56] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*, 304, 305.

[57] Christopher Wintle, 'An Island Formation in Schoenberg's Fourth String Quartet: Notes from a Diary', in Alison Latham (ed.), *Sing, Ariel: Essays and Thoughts for Alexander Goehr's Seventieth Birthday* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 294; Babbitt, *Words About Music*, 138.

[58] Heinrich Jalowetz, 'On the Spontaneity of Schoenberg's Music', *Musical Quarterly*, 30/4 (1944), 401–2.

discussion of analytical methodological issues'. In the case of work by Alastair Williams, 'those accustomed to dealing with serial theory, set theory or generalised interval systems' will find the analyses presented 'technically naïve or even impressionistic'.[59] In response, let us consider Ex. 3c again; or better, Ex. 3c in company with Example 3d, which takes up the first movement of the Fourth Quartet where Ex. 3c leaves off, continuing to the middle of bar 31. Wintle's comments on 'phrasing and form' derive from a report on an analytical lecture in which Alexander Goehr, while apparently following Schoenberg in referring to the opening theme of the Quartet as a two-part structure (bars 1–6 and 7–9), also took 'the theme' to run to bar 16. Wintle agrees with this revision of what is purportedly Schoenberg's own analysis: 'for the "proper" first subject', he avers, 'falls clearly into a small ternary form' (with the repeat at bar 10). Babbitt too hears bar $16^2$ as 'the end of the first section of the piece', while Joel Lester anticipates Wintle's 'ternary' reading. Yet none of these commentators give much sense of how one is meant to grasp the music of Ex. 3d, especially its opening bars.[60]

One solution is provided by Pascall. As we saw, he reads the opening theme as a period. There is an antecedent at bars 1–9 (basic idea, bars $1–6^2$; contrasting idea, bars $6^3–9$) and a consequent at bars 10–24 (basic idea, bars $10–16^3$; contrasting idea, bars $16^4–24$). Pascall gives two reasons why bars $16^4–24$ 'should become perceptually attached to the preceding music'. They 'offer a variation of bars $6^3–9$ together with the four-[quaver] + [crotchet] figure from bar $2^{1–3}$ [in the upper strings at bars $17^3–18^1$]'. And they employ the same row form as the previous contrasting idea. But against Pascall's reading one must set the cadential quality of bars 14–16: a 'musical "full stop"', as Wintle describes it, followed by a 'brief silence that [...] puts the structural division beyond doubt'.[61]

To sit on the fence of 'formal ambiguity' would be to conceal the real difficulties of Ex. 3d. A division at bar 25 is clear: Adorno calls this a 'secondary theme'.[62] The question of what to do with bars $16^4–24$ remains. Proponents of the ternary reading will presumably speak of a transition, perhaps divided at bar $21^2$. The periodic reading does not fare much better. Pascall too quickly labels the passage 'a variation of bars $6^3–9$', since the cello line at bars $16–21^2$, the *Hauptstimme* at this point, refers

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[59] Henry Klumpenhouwer, 'Late Capitalism, Late Marxism and the Study of Music', *Music Analysis*, 20/3 (2001), 392, 390–1.

[60] See Wintle, 'An Island Formation', 294–5; Babbitt, *Words About Music*, 73; Joel Lester, *Analytic Approaches to Twentieth-Century Music* (New York and London: Norton, 1989), 192–3. Schoenberg's own analytical comments, which can be read in Ursula von Rauchhaupt (ed.), *Schoenberg, Berg, Webern. Die Streichquartette der Wiener Schule. Eine Dokumentation* (Munich/Hamburg: Verlag Heinrich Ellermann/Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft, 1971), 59–60, in fact refer just to bars 1–7 as 'the main theme'. There is no talk of division into parts. Of these four commentators, the only one to pay any attention to the opening bars of Ex. 3d is Babbitt, yet characteristically, he homes in on a tiny detail (the chords in the upper instruments at bar $16^4–17^2$) of little musical significance. See Babbitt, *Words About Music*, 74–5.

[61] Pascall, 'Theory and Practice', 238–9n32; Wintle, 'An Island Formation', 295.

[62] Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 79. With more subtlety, Pascall ('Theory and Practice', 239) views bars 25–6 as an 'anticipatory curtain' to a ternary theme beginning in bar 27.

explicitly to bars $6^3$–9 only in its final descending fourth. The cello's gesture in bar 17 is more likely to remind listeners of the first violin's music at bar 10, while its ensuing music (up to the $e\flat^2$) is not obviously related to any of the previous melodic lines, none of which share its dotted rhythms.[63] As for bars $21^2$–4, they simply do not fit under Pascall's rubric. Their function is that of a transition; in Schoenbergian language a 'liquidating' transition that transforms its 'motival characteristics' (the triplets of the imitative entries) into the accompanying lines of bar 25 onwards.[64] Even this process is far from straightforward. The *forte* interruption of the viola in bar 24 may be easy to explain motivically. But what is its musical sense? Does it anticipate the crotchet triplets of bars $30^3$–$1^2$?

Despite its references to traditional style – Wintle speaks of a 'Mahlerian-march type' – the continuity of Schoenberg's music is fractured, sometimes very hard to grasp. As Wintle continues, 'Goehr is certainly more right to talk of an ill-at-ease quality than are all the positivistic analysts who fail even to sense it.'[65] This instance of high modernism makes an instructive contrast with the late modernist Nono of Ex. 1b. Whereas in *Il canto sospeso*, the listener clings to moments of melodic continuity that emerge unpredictably from the otherwise pointillistic texture, in the first movement of the Fourth Quartet, one has the sense of a musical discourse poised on the edge of incomprehensibility, liable to collapse at any moment 'from the intentional to the material realm', as Scruton has it: from continuity to discontinuity, tone to sound.[66]

Klumpenhouwer rejects the Adornian dismissal of 'certain dominant uses of music-analytical methodology' as fruitless. If pitch-class set analysis does indeed constitute an 'obvious' expression of 'identity thinking', which 'falsely annuls all contradictions, oppositions, remainders and differences, smudging the distinction between concepts on the one hand and their referents on the other', the same must be said of any other analytical method, for 'identity thinking, as Adorno reminds us, is fundamental to *all* styles of consciousness and cognition under capitalism.'[67] Klumpenhouwer's position is not just a counsel of despair; in its failure to refer to 'mimesis' it is a misrepresentation. As he recognizes from his reading of Shierry Weber Nicholson, genuine aesthetic experience involves interaction of subjective and objective poles. Indeed, Klumpenhouwer eloquently explains why, from an Adornian perspective, the procedures of 'contemporary music analysis' need to be jettisoned, bound as they are to formalism as to a 'creation myth'. For 'traditional formalism is reliant on an absolute discontinuity between aesthetic subjects and objects, along with commitment exclusively

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[63] Note also how the cello line at bars 17–$21^2$ lacks the two-part structures of all three previous melodic phrases, which clearly divide at bars 3, 8 and 12, respectively.

[64] Schoenberg, *Fundamentals*, 179.

[65] Wintle, 'An Island Formation', 296, 297.

[66] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*, 281.

[67] Klumpenhouwer, 'Late Capitalism', 388, 391.

to abandon the realm of the subject in favour of investigations of the logic that controls the object realm.'[68] But what Klumpenhouwer takes as objective is, for Adorno, nothing of the sort.

## V

For Adorno, music speaks. It is articulated in a manner analogous to the structures of verbal language. This is 'a universal characteristic of music'.[69] Like Jalowetz, Adorno displays an apparently reckless absolutism. For only by over-shooting the object can thought be free to determine it. There is no possibility of relativism, which equates to bourgeois positivism: not just a refusal of experience (a separation of subject and object), but a 'bad' absolutism, a jealous guarding of scraps of knowledge as if they were possessions.[70] The speech-character of the opening bars of Schoenberg's Fourth Quartet is objective: not a construction, but something that imposes itself on the experiencing subject. It may be too easy to dismiss as 'unmusical' those analysts who disregard this aspect of Op. 37. Adorno understands works of art not as timeless but as 'unfolding' historically. Wagner's introduction of flexible tempi in the performance of Beethoven was not imposed externally. The score demanded 'a change of representation for the sake of its own objectivity'.[71] Yet if the standard positivistic approach to the Fourth Quartet genuinely reflects its practitioners' experience of this music (which is difficult to believe), one can only concur with Silvina Milstein's diagnosis of an 'abyss separating the post-War generation from Schoenberg'.[72]

The twentieth century, so the art historian T. J. Clark has recently suggested, was '*felt* by artists and intellectuals [...] to be [...] the end of something called bourgeois society'.[73] Both Keller and Barthes express this very clearly; one could characterise Adorno's entire music-critical corpus – not to speak of texts like *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and *Minima Moralia* – as a meditation on this same phenomenon. Pitch-class set analysis shows us what the music of the twentieth century would sound like once all traces of bourgeois culture had definitively disappeared. The very essence of musical modernism's self-understanding lay in its complex engagement with the bourgeois canon of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Unable to recognise this, Forte's method treats its object as something archaic, alien and incomprehensible: not just aesthetically but also historically. For the bourgeois subject, as Barthes vividly illustrates, the musical work of art was, above all, a means to bodily identification. By contrast, Schoenberg's music – so Adorno has it – 'becomes highly allergic

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[68] *Ibid.*, 393–4; see also Shierry Weber Nicholson, *Exact Imagination, Late Work: On Adorno's Aesthetics* (Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 1997), 1–58.

[69] Theodor W. Adorno, *Quasi una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London and New York: Verso, 1998), 1.

[70] Adorno, *Towards a Theory*, 54; Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 126–8.

[71] Adorno, *Towards a Theory*, 195, 165.

[72] Silvina Milstein, *Arnold Schoenberg: Notes, Sets, Forms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), xii.

[73] T. J. Clark, *Picasso and Truth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 16–17.

[...] to every tendency to ingratiate itself with the listener as well as the latter's efforts to ingratiate himself with it, to all identification and empathy'.[74] A 'scientific' approach might thus seem to be invited. But this opposition is too polarised. As Clark recognizes, the 'deepest and most persistent note' in modernism belongs to those artists who recoiled from a belief 'in some version of modernity's movement forward, toward rationality or transparency or full disenchantment'.[75] If the first movement of the String Quartet No. 3, Op. 30 (1927), 'achieves a musical cubism', operating 'with completely rigid, pure, and in a sense geometrical symmetries', Schoenberg's American twelve-note works 'pose the question of how construction can become expression'.[76]

The thematic elements in the first movement of Schoenberg's Fourth Quartet relate stylistically to the composer's pre-atonal music, especially the First Chamber Symphony, Op. 9 (1906).[77] Yet Adorno's understanding of this music is not restricted to its 'surface' characteristics. Ethan Haimo, building on the work of Babbitt, David Lewin, Martha Hyde, Andrew Mead and others, observes how '[b]y Op. 31 [the Variations for Orchestra of 1928] the set had become a referential idea, not merely for local melodic figures, but for the harmony, the form, the metre, as well as, in specialized situations, middleground melodic control.' Schoenberg had 'transformed' the serial idea 'until it embraced every dimension of the musical fabric'. For Adorno, this had been the goal all along. He locates the origin of twelve-note technique in a search for 'a common denominator for all musical elements'. The problem is that 'this unification threatens to undermine every single musical dimension.' Indeed, '[t]he failure of the technical artwork can be confirmed in all dimensions of its composition.'[78]

Adorno's sociological reading of the American Schoenberg is well known. The heroic failure of the composer's attempt to instil the empty clatter of the twelve-note mechanism with expressivity produces an irreconcilable 'struggle between alienated objectivity and limited subjectivity' that is its 'truth'. In contrast to the administered society of late capitalism, of which twelve-note technique is a formal analogue, Schoenberg's later music is to be praised for not suppressing its antagonisms.[79] Less widely appreciated – in musicological circles, at least – is the more philosophical lesson Adorno draws here. If the quality of 'speaking' is objectively present in the later Schoenberg, the process by which the subject comes to appreciate this is by no means passive. For it is not conceptless. Without the terms 'phrase', 'sentence', 'period', and so forth, we cannot communicate a sense of how this music goes. Nor is this yet 'mimesis'. Adorno's use of the term is negative. It is precisely in the moments of faltering syntax identified above, when our concepts are resisted by the very music that

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[74] Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*, 261–2; Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1967), 158.

[75] Clark, *Picasso and Truth*, 14, 19.

[76] Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, 77.

[77] *Ibid.*, 80.

[78] Ethan Haimo, *Schoenberg's Serial Odyssey* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 41, viii; Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, 45, 65, 57 (translation modified).

[79] Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, 81, 75.

suggested their use, that we genuinely encounter the work of art. Shocked by these departures from musical convention, listeners find themselves embodying a mode of subjectivity that is indeed receptive rather than classificatory. Such moments are of metaphysical significance; they constitute 'real experiences', 'true happiness', even.[80] In *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, Adorno characterises the return of experience 'in the rebellion of music against its own meaning' as a mythic rebirth. 'The man who surrenders to tears in music that no longer resembles him at the same time allows the stream of what he himself is not – what was dammed up back in the world of things – to flow back into him.' A music that, in its flashes of objective incomprehensibility, reaches beyond 'meaning and subjectivity', uncovers an archaic level of experience that betokens reconciliation.[81]

**Part Two: Analysis**

In his sociological work, Adorno can appear to occupy two incompatible positions: on the one hand, the forbidding theorist of the inhuman, administered society; on the other, the lucid public intellectual urging West Germans to cultivate autonomous individuality.[82] A similar contrast can be found in his writings on the Second Viennese School. Adorno is at once the philosopher of redemption in music beyond sense and 'the faithful repetiteur' – *Der getreue Korrepetitor* – encouraging performers towards a more musically meaningful phrasing.[83] If this music is poorly played, moments of faltering syntax will be indistinguishable from any other. Indeed, Adorno declares, 'senselessness in the presentation of new music is almost universal'.[84] Take the opening of Schoenberg's Five Orchestral Pieces, Op. 16 (1909), conducted by Rafael Kubelik. In the six bars shown in Example 4a, Adorno writes,

> The three-bar main theme is followed by a dissolved, also three-bar consequent that is extremely opaque [*ein äußerst schwer durchzuhörender Nachsatz*]. The dynamics are evidently indicated 'subjectively', i.e. according to the playing techniques of the instruments, e.g. an accompanying trill in two flutes is *f*, against which the principal voice in the clarinet is *p*; equally a distinct middle voice in the horn is *p*, a non-melodic lower voice in the bassoon *f*. The final bar is a solo rhythm played by a muted horn, marked *f*. R. Kubelik follows the indications most obediently in the recording. But because the diving clarinet figure, which leads into the horn rhythm, *genuinely* comes out *p* in its awkward register, a dynamic hole results between it and the muted horn, despite the good 'connection'; as a result of the unmediated dynamic difference, one can no longer perceive that rhythm as what it is, namely the melodic continuation of the clarinet. Thus the sense of the entire passage, which is delicate enough in any case, becomes incomprehensible – and at the same time that of

[80] O'Connor, *Adorno*, 170.

[81] Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, 98–9.

[82] O'Connor, *Adorno*, 13, 130–5.

[83] See Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, xv, 157–402.

[84] Adorno, *Towards a Theory*, 122.

> the entire exposition, which depends on the relationship between antecedent and consequent. The only thing that might help would be dynamic *retouching*, i.e. to have the clarinet play loudly enough for the horn to follow on seamlessly from it. But exactly this – contrary to the letter of the notation – presupposes *analysis*; the diving demisemiquavers in the clarinet are thematic (from the counterpoint to the main theme). And it is precisely this step that was *not* taken by the musical, faithfully vigilant conductor.[85]

When Babbitt looks at this same passage, his concern is to demonstrate how Schoenberg is 'composing with the tones of the motive'.[86] The penultimate sentence of the above extract indicates that Adorno too takes 'analysis' to involve microscopic attention. Schoenberg himself used to analyse music at this level, of course, yet 'his actual *Formenlehre*', as William E. Caplin puts it, 'has little connection to melody and motive'.[87] In atonal rather than tonal repertory, such a distinction is harder to maintain. Many of the conventions on which traditional *Formenlehre* depends, most obviously the interdependence of formal function and tonal harmony, are no longer operative. In the prototypically Schoenbergian opening bars of the early song 'Lockung', Op. 6, No. 7 (1905), Adorno writes, the apparently unrelated 'groups' of material are to be understood in terms of a 'general unity of motivic-thematic relations'. But at the same time, he suggests, 'the groups are also syntactically linked'.[88] The latter point is crucial. The present argument rests on the conviction that when it comes to the sense of Schoenberg's post-tonal music, the kind of *Formenlehre* preoccupations Adorno demonstrates in respect to Op. 16, No. 1 are of greater importance than any motivic links.

One may quibble with Adorno's 'antecedent' and 'consequent', since there is little sense of periodic construction in Ex. 4a. These bars nevertheless fall into two three-bar units, of which the second stands in gestural response to the more lyrical first. And as Adorno suggests, this contrast informs 'the entire exposition' (bars 1–25), given in Example 4b in short score. The pair of materials appears a further three times: first at bars 7–14 (dividing after bar 9), then at bars 15–22 (dividing after bar 19). The third appearance is less obvious, beginning simultaneously with the end of the second (bar 22) and lasting until the end of the example (dividing after bar 23). It is not just the substance of such an approach that is important, but its potential audience. When Adorno claims that Webern's Six Bagatelles, Op. 9 (1909), cannot be meaningfully presented in the absence of prior analysis,[89] his intention is not that the members of any string quartet brave enough to tackle the work should

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[85] Adorno, *Towards a Theory*, 146–7 (translation modified). The reference is presumably to Kubelik's 1953 recording with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Adorno uses the 1912 edition (reproduced in Ex. 4a) rather than the 1922 revision, which alters some dynamics and adds *Hauptstimme* markings.

[86] Babbitt, *Words About Music*, 157–8.

[87] William E. Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 259–60n12.

[88] Adorno, *Prisms*, 153–4.

[89] Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002), 168.

launch themselves on a hunt for some abstract pitch-class set unity. Analysts working in the tradition of Babbitt and Forte speak only to each other. But phrase analysis could benefit readers outside as well as inside the academy. It is directed primarily at performers.

## I

We do not have to take Adorno's word for it that analysis is necessary in post-tonal repertory. Evidence is abundantly available in many of the recently released recordings of music by Schoenberg's pupil Nikos Skalkottas (1904–49), whose work is the object of the first of the three books on twelve-note repertory which it will be the task of the second part of this essay to review.[90] After decades of neglect by record companies, today a representative selection of Skalkottas's music in all genres is ready to hand. It is a mixed blessing. To listen to the Malmö Symphony Orchestra under Nikos Christodoulou in the thirty-two-minute *Largo sinfonico* intended by Skalkottas for his Second Orchestral Suite (left incomplete at his death) is to wonder why anyone should have bothered with it in the first place.[91] From performances like this one learns exactly what it means not to speak the language of music. Skalkottas was evidently a monomaniacal dilettante, sitting up night after night in an indifferent Athens to notate immense scores according to esoteric schemes (in the case of the *Largo sinfonico*, an ordered superset of 16 distinct 12-note sets): compositions that give the visual impression of music, but in reality are mere frameworks absent of sense.

Listeners will need to look beyond the BIS recordings to discover how impressive Skalkottas's music is capable of sounding.[92] But this unfortunate situation ought to present an opportunity. Analysis can demonstrate the musical character of Skalkottas's music: the basis on which it might be made to speak. Unhappily there is little in Eva Mantzourani's book that will be of help in this regard. The most successful section is the opening 80-page 'biographical study'. In an unsparing account, Mantzourani shows that if the story of Skalkottas's life was 'largely [...] lonely, depressing, difficult and ultimately tragic', the composer should nonetheless be seen as 'more the architect of his own misfortune than one who suffered unreasonably from life's vicissitudes'. For Skalkottas, the rapid and furtive composition of an extensive body of music, most of which remained unpublished and unperformed during his lifetime, could be viewed 'almost as an act of resistance to the vulgarity and constraints of the despised environment that he felt surrounded him' (75–6).

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[90] Eva Mantzourani, *The Life and Twelve-Note Music of Nikos Skalkottas* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011). xxvi + 414pp. £80. ISBN 978–0–7546–6310–3 (hardcover).

[91] BIS-CD-904 (1998).

[92] It is worth seeking out the live 1979 performance of the Overture for Large Orchestra (*The Return of Ulysses*) (1942–44/49) by the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Miltiades Caridis, on Koch Schwann Musica Mundi CD 311 110 H1 (1990), or the 1962 premiere of the Violin Concerto (1938) with Tibor Varga and the North German Radio Symphony Orchestra Hamburg under Michael Gielen, currently available (16 May 2014) at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNqpNqfunF8>. In the chamber music, the performance of the Third Quartet (1935) by the Dartington String Quartet remains unsurpassed: EMI ALP 2289 (1966) / Argo ZRG 753 (1973).

The rest of Mantzourani's hefty book is given over to analysis. There are 100 pages on Skalkottas's twelve-note technique, and a further 150 that provide 'case studies' of his 'twelve-note development'. Evidently modelled after Haimo's *Schoenberg's Serial Odyssey*, this design causes problems, particularly with regard to the availability of materials. Recordings of many of Skalkottas's compositions may now be at hand; the same cannot be said of their scores.[93] Even where these are available, they may not be useful. Those of the Second String Trio (1935) and First Piano Suite (1936) are reproductions of the composer's barely legible manuscript. For much of the time, the reader of this book is confronted with detailed accounts of music that can be heard but not seen. And sometimes not even that: while the First Symphonic Suite is clearly one of Skalkottas's most imposing creations, one wonders about the author's purpose in devoting an entire chapter (245–73) to a work that has been neither recorded nor published.

Why is Mantzourani pushed to such obscurity? There are a number of more easily accessible atonal scores from Skalkottas's Athens period, including some that have even gained a toehold in the repertory (for example, the Concertino for oboe and piano accompaniment of 1939), to which she pays no attention. But while these works may be atonal, they are not twelve-note. Although Skalkottas's best-known music remains his tonal *Greek Dances*, the composer's musicological reputation rests on his having been a serialist. Mantzourani observes that 'the vast majority of his surviving works use predominantly twelve-note idioms' (6). In the last decade of Skalkottas's career, however, this is not the case. Not only are there a number of tonal compositions from these years; the atonal music of this period often has an ambiguous relation to dodecaphony. Mantzourani writes of a 'free dodecaphonic technique', but gives no sense of how music thus composed might relate to works that are not primarily twelve-note. Happiest with the 'strict' compositions that were the first Skalkottas completed following his return to Athens, to a striking degree her book concerns itself with works composed in just a single pair of (admittedly fecund) years, 1935–6.[94]

Mantzourani would like to appear open to the expressive content of Skalkottas's work. At the end of her 'Bibliographical Study', she declares that '[i]rrepressible activity, constant forward motion, and an agitated, agonized quest for something unattainable are the characteristic elements that govern this music' (77); in an 'Epilogue', she writes of 'immediacy of sound, expressive power and sheer, unbridled energy' (338). She takes the unusual step of threading through her book the stanzas of Cavafy's celebrated 'Ithaca'. Presumably the experiential riches to which the poet refers are intended *mutatis mutandis* to strike a chord with readers working their way through her text. But

[93] Of the works studied by Mantzourani, the following are apparently not present in any UK library: the First String Quartet (1928), Second Sonatina for violin and piano (1929), First Piano Concerto (1931), Third Sonatina for violin and piano (1935), Third String Quartet (1935), First Symphonic Suite for large orchestra (1935), Second Piano Concerto (1937–38), the first and third movements of the Third Concerto for piano, ten winds and percussion (1939), and the *Ouvertüre Concertante* from the Second Symphonic Suite for large orchestra (1942–44/46/49). Of these, the orchestral scores have never been published. The slow movement of the Third Piano Concerto appeared in 1954 as *Andante sostenuto*, in an edition by Walter Goehr (London: Universal).

[94] As well as those mentioned above, there is also a Fourth Sonatina for violin and piano and a Concertino for two pianos and orchestra (both 1935).

alas, it is the work of a thoroughgoing positivist. Outside the encomia just cited, the experience of listening to Skalkottas's music is barely even a topic for discussion.

Emblematic of Mantzourani's approach are the tables that pepper her text. Future writers on Skalkottas's twelve-note music will be able to turn to them with confidence: the basic work of row identification has been reliably carried out. As a means to convey what is 'really going on in Skalkottas's music' (xxiii), however, tabular presentation of data, in its detemporalised abstraction, is unsuitable. Mantzourani contends that 'deciphering and mapping out the technical parameters' of the composer's twelve-note technique 'is necessary for any informed future discussion of Skalkottas's dodecaphonic music' (6). Against such a statement, one should place the words of the composer's principal Berlin teacher. Schoenberg was particularly impressed by the Octet (1931) for string quartet with flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon:

> One can see the systematic way with which he build his themes and sentences, the elaboration of the motivic work, qualities with which I judge my students' works. This is an outstanding work. (38)

Mantzourani is not entirely unresponsive to this aspect of Skalkottas's music. Throughout her study she makes use of the Schoenbergian vocabulary of motive, phrase, period and sentence. Yet her employment of these terms is not always very successful. Let us consider her response to Example 5, which shows the first 24 bars of the Octet's opening movement.

## II

In such a busy polyphonic idiom, the clear articulation of phrases and themes is imperative, if the music is not to descend into incoherence. If bars 11–12 sound no more transparent in the old Melos Ensemble recording than they do in the new BIS version, that is not necessarily the fault of the players.[95] As Judit Alsmeier has pointed out, identification of themes in this movement is rendered problematic by Skalkottas's techniques of 'dissolution'. Bars $17^4$–20 should strictly be compared with bars 4–$6^2$, since at bars $17^4$–20 Skalkottas brings back both the wind and string parts of the earlier passage (with the scoring reversed). But it will be sufficient to compare the first violin at bars $17^4$–20 with the same instrument's music at bars $0^4$–$4^1$. Transposed up an octave, the later violin line retains its rhythmic character (until bar $19^3$), but the b♮$^2$ and b♭$^2$ in bar 18 are substituted for the expected e♭$^3$ and c$^3$ (placed two octaves lower in the second violin). Then at bars $19^4$–20, while the ordered pitch classes of bars $2^3$–$4^1$ are retained, their rhythmic presentation is transformed.[96]

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[95] The 1966 Melos Ensemble performance has reappeared in an 11-CD set, EMI 9185412 (2011). The BIS recording, which couples the New Hellenic Quartet with Scandinavian woodwind players, is on BIS-CD-1124 (2001).

[96] See Judit Alsmeier, *Komponieren mit Tönen: Nikos Skalkottas und Schönbergs 'Komposition mit zwölf Tönen'* (Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2001), 95–9.

Mantzourani identifies an opening 'period structure', which she calls 'A', based on the first violin's opening twelve-note melody, and a 'B' section at bars $7^4$–11, which presents 'a new thematic idea in the bassoon [...], based on a new twelve-note set'. An '$A^{1\prime}$' section is 'characterized by a dense, antiphonal texture between the winds and strings'; finally 'section C' (beginning at bar $23^3$) features a melody that is not quite twelve-note (200–1). Problems begin with the initial identification of a period. The segmentation of bars $0^4$–$7^3$ into a three-bar antecedent and four-bar consequent is unconvincing, since from a Schoenbergian perspective the two phrases lack the contrasting ideas that ought to appear in both. Rather than viewing bars $0^4$–$7^3$ and $7^4$–11 as distinct sections, we might instead grasp the whole of bars $0^4$–23 as a single thematic unit: a ternary shape that opens with the kind of immediate repetition characteristic of a sentence. Mantzourani is keen to show how the bassoon line at bars $7^4$–11 completes the chromatic while incorporating an 'interpolation' in bar 10 (101–2). She does not ask herself whether bar 11, rather than marking the end of a section, might initiate a repetition of the material introduced by the bassoon at bars $7^4$–10. It is bars $7^4$–$17^3$ that can be heard to open as a period.[97] Certainly the antecedent (bars $7^4$–10) possesses the right kind of two-part structure, even if it is only three-bars long. The contrast between bars $7^4$–$9^1$ and $9^2$–10 is clear. But most prominent in the two recordings at bars 11 and 12 is the material heard on flute and oboe (bar 11) and then clarinet and first violin (bar 12), which (as Mantzourani points out: 101) echoes the bassoon's 'interpolation' of bar 10. So when the viola enters in bar 13 with a version of the bassoon's 'contrasting idea' from bar 9, it comes from nowhere, stripped of the 'basic idea' that should have preceded it. In order to make sense of this passage, performers need to realise, first, that at bar 11 the bassoon both remains the *Hauptstimme* and launches a consequent phrase to its antecedent at bars $7^4$–10, and second, that on the final quaver of bar 11, the *Hauptstimme* passes to the cello (as indicated by the *forte* dynamic), which repeats the rhythms (and the pitch classes) of the bassoon's basic idea before passing the line to the viola.[98]

Mantzourani asks whether this movement might be a rondo or a ternary form. If she plumps finally for sonata, this is partly on account of the music's 'tonal' structure. Misled, presumably, by the least convincing aspect of Milstein's work on Schoenberg, Mantzourani finds it appropriate to make quasi-Schenkerian analyses of '[l]arge-scale movement in the bass line' (202). In the case of Ex. 5, she cannot claim that the pitches she extracts from the cello line have any tonal function. Yet the look of the repeated Gs and Cs in bars 13–16 was apparently irresistible. Thus the '$A^{1\prime}$' section gives us a 'cadence' in C (evidently the G–C between the final pitch at the end of bar 20 and the bass of the chord in bars 21–2), and the 'A' section has a 'cadence' on G (the repeated G at bar $7^3$). As non-functional (and generally inaudible), these identifications are irrelevant to the movement's form. They also cast doubt on Mantzourani's feeling for the sense of Skalkottas's music. Consider the role of the clarinet in bars 15–17. Taking up the viola's material from bar 13–14, it departs from the primarily conjunct character of the viola's line by means of octave displacement. Yet in bar 16, instead of taking this development further, the clarinet makes the very classical gesture of waiting. It

[97] Mantzourani appears undecided about the status of bars 12–$17^3$. In her book, the 'B' section is at bars $7^4$–11, but in her article, 'Nikos Skalkottas: Sets and Styles in the Octet', *Musical Times*, 145/1888 (2004), 82n6, it is at bars $7^4$–17.

[98] Partly responsible for the confusion must be the editorial *forte* in the flute and clarinet at bar 11 in the published edition (London: Universal, 1967), omitted in Ex. 5.

liquidates the motive of bar 15 in a semiquaver figuration before leading the ensemble in a quasi-half-close (its opening $a^2$–$b♭^2$ transposed up an octave) before the return of the material of bars $0^4$–$4^1$. From a tonal perspective, the quality identified at the end of the 'B' section (bars $7^4$–$17^3$) should be dominant, not tonic.

There is another source for Mantzourani's tonalism. In a short piece from 1954, Hans Keller hailed Skalkottas as a genius – on the basis of a tape of the 1953 premiere of the Second Piano Concerto; he had no score.[99] Though he was never to publish a more detailed appraisal of Skalkottas's music, Keller was happy to pronounce the composer not just a genius, but a 'symphonic genius', the only one since Schoenberg to have successfully built on the latter's example. Keller's understanding of Schoenberg was special. 'Harmonically [...] his dodecaphony is composed against the background [...] of well-defined, well-implied, but violently suppressed [...] tonal expectations, whose replacement [...] makes instinctive sense, and this is why and how his twelve-tone harmony "works".'[100] In an article closely related to the material of her book (compare pp. 214–21), Mantzourani takes up the challenge. The first movement of Skalkottas's Third String Quartet is composed against the 'unifying background' of a C major that is 'frequently suppressed and disguised'. In the opening paragraph of this sonata movement, shown in Example 6, C major is nowhere to be seen. Undeterred, Mantzourani emphasises the harmonies at bars $11^{1–3}$ and $14^3$, suggesting that the 'textural layout' of these bars, 'aurally emphasising the triadic content of several tetrachords [...] outlines a harmonic movement from an A-major/A♯-diminished to [a] C♯ minor triad'.[101]

Mantzourani convincingly points out how the diminished seventh of bars 9–10 resolves to bar 11. On the other hand, her suggestion that the cello's D♯ at bar $14^3$ 'functions as a leading-note to the following $e^{1'}$ is specious, while the emphasis on the C♯ minor triadic component of the harmony at bar $14^3$ seems misguided, not just because it involves turning a deaf ear to the D♯ in the bass, but also because it distorts the musical sense of the passage. If the bass comes to a rest towards the end of Skalkottas's first phrase, it is at bar $13^4$, significantly marked with an accent. The warm $C♯^9$ sonority is sustained over the bar line, suggesting an expansion of the notated common time to a 5/4 metre. Following this, the two chords at bar $14^{2–3}$ act not as the conclusion to a harmonic progression, but as a gesture of dismissal: a 2/4 bar that clears the air before the start of the second phrase at bar $14^4$.

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[99] Hans Keller, 'Nikos Skalkottas: An Original Genius', *The Listener*, 52/134 (1954), 1041. The performance, by George Hadjinikos with the North German Radio Orchestra Hamburg under Herman Scherchen, has since surfaced on Arkadia CDGI 768.1 (1993).

[100] Hans Keller, *Essays on Music*, ed. Christopher Wintle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 191; Hans Keller, 'Schoenberg's Return to Tonality', *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute*, 5/1 (1981), 7.

[101] Eva Mantzourani, 'Hans Keller, Nikos Skalkottas and the Notion of Symphonic Genius', *Tempo*, 67/263 (2013), 54, 47.

Mantzourani's search for triadic elements has clouded her musical response, and Keller is to blame. '[T]oo proud to descend to mere helpfulness', as Robin Holloway puts it, Keller's refusal to parse the 'foreground' of his examples was justified by a belief that 'musical' listeners would grasp it instinctively, and that if others did not, analysis was *de facto* wasted on them.[102] But analysis of the 'foreground' of twelve-note music was always what was required. In order to make the score exemplify Keller's claim that Schoenbergian structures sometimes begin 'before the beginning', Mantzourani suggests that the 'exposition proper' of the material of Ex. 6 starts only at bar $14^4$; at the same time, she designates bars $14^4$–$23^2$ as a consequent to the antecedent at bars 1–$14^3$.[103] The latter reading is appropriate: the slow unfolding of harmonies at bars 1–10 constitutes the 'basic idea'; the more rapid homophonic movement of bars 11–$14^3$ the 'contrasting idea'. Both then return: the unfolding at bars $14^4$–$18^3$; the more rapid movement at bars $18^4$–$23^2$. By bar 23, the consequent of the opening period would seem to be complete, yet there are a further four bars before the next obvious formal break at bar 28. Mantzourani treats bars 18–27 as a period in themselves, the first violin outlining an antecedent at bars $18^4$–$23^2$ and a consequent at bars $23^3$–7. This is unsatisfactory, since the new period not only lacks the 'basic idea'/'contrasting idea' duality; it also cuts across the previously established period at bars 1–$23^2$. As for bars 28–$42^1$, Mantzourani offers 'Varied and condensed repetition of antecedent' (bars 28–$33^1$) and 'Transition and chordal cadence' (bars $33^4$–$42^1$).[104] Neither label is very helpful.

As far as pitch is concerned, Skalkottas proceeds here in a strictly linear fashion, typical of his music of 1935. Each instrument at bars 1–$14^3$ introduces its own row, which it then repeats, without transposition, inversion or retrogression until the end of the example.[105] Skalkottas relies on texture, and above all rhythm, to sustain interest. Though Mantzourani barely mentions this feature, acceleration (first encountered in bars 9–10) could well be taken as the 'idea' of Ex. 6. The process, which reaches a climax of intensity at bar 37, is intriguingly non-uniform. At bars $14^4$–$16^3$, the opening chromatic tetrachord unfolds (in inversion) at twice its previous speed; the following whole-tone tetrachord appears ready (at bars $16^4$–$17^1$) to double the speed once more. But Skalkottas holds back the arrival of the d♭$^2$ by two crotchets, producing an elongated c♭$^2$ (and then e♭$^2$ in parallel), the music at once pressing forward and held back.

In her book, Mantzourani declares that in 'Skalkottas's dodecaphonic works based on a limited number of sets, the periodicity of the twelve-note set-groups largely constitutes the basis of the phrase structure' (132). Yet in Ex. 6, the composer sometimes avoids a serial/phrasing homology. We noted earlier how the two chords at bar $14^{2–3}$ lead on into the phrase that immediately follows; they

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[102] Robin Holloway, *On Music: Essays and Diversions 1963–2003* (Brinkworth: Claridge Press, 2003), 412; Keller, 'Description, Analysis and Criticism', 114, 117.

[103] Mantzourani, 'Hans Keller', 47, 44.

[104] Mantzourani, 'Hans Keller', 44, 48.

[105] The rows are: G, E♭, G♯, A♮, A♯, D, F♯, C, B♮, F♮, E, C♯ (first violin); F♯, D♭, F♮, E, D, A, E♭, B♭, C, B♮, G♮, G♯ (second violin); F♮, C♭, D, C♯, C♮, B♭, A, G♯, G♮, E♭, F♯, E♮ (viola); and E, A♮, B, A♯, G♯, G♮, D, F♮, G♭, C♯, C♮, D♯ (cello).

are constructed from order numbers 11 and 12 of the first quartet of rows. At bars $23^{1-2}$, this disjunction is more evident. Musically, the first violin's syncopated $e^2$ and $c\sharp^2$ are bound to the following $g^2$, not to the preceding $f^2$, while the accompaniment to the final two pitches of the first violin's row emphasises the connection to bars $23^3$–7 in that it introduces the pairs of quavers heard in bar 24. Mantzourani refers to bar 27 as a 'cadence'; yet as at bars 12 and 22, the phrase proper comes to an end when the bass reaches $D\flat$ (previously spelled $C\sharp$) at bar $26^3$. Bar $27^{2-4}$ would be better heard as pressing forward to the quavers of bar 30.

The sudden reappearance at bars 28–9 of a texture and rhythmic style akin to those of the movement's opening is the most striking example of holding back in Ex. 6. After the quavers of bars 30–$3^2$, Skalkottas halts his music's momentum once again. Like bars 30–$3^2$, the following section in syncopated chords opens in the manner of a sentence. A model (bars $33^3$–4, parallel to bar 30) is immediately followed by its varied repetition (bars 34–$5^2$, parallel to bar 31). But where, at the point of expected continuation, the quavers petered out in fragmented repetition, the syncopated chords explode into a climax, with imitative entries from all four instruments. This is another place where phrase structure and twelve-note order do not coincide. For when the first violin arrives at $g^3$, which is order number 1 of the final statement of its row in Ex. 6, the other instruments are still completing the rows begun at bar 33. The final phrase of the extract emerges into clarity only at bars $38^4$–$9^3$, with their climactic statements of the whole-tone and diminished seventh tetrachords, leading to an unmistakable return to the texture of bars 11–12.

## III

Keller's admiration for Skalkottas was probably genuine. The form of the Third Quartet's *Allegro moderato* would have met with his approval, inasmuch as it exemplifies the 'Mannheim' reversed recapitulation (Mantzourani misses this), which, along with the return to the material of the opening at the start of the development (bars $82^4$–$90^3$), produces the sonata rondo effect he regarded as a formal compensation for the loss of tonality. And as Mantzourani rightly points out, the movement's subordinate theme creates the kind of contrast with the music of Ex. 6 that Keller regarded as a sine qua non of symphonism.[106] But quite how 'Schoenbergian' Keller would have labelled this music surely turns on the issue of 'development'. For Mantzourani, 'development' or 'developing variation' appears to be demonstrated by the discovery, in apparently unrelated materials, of invariant segments.[107] But for Keller, 'development' refers to an audible and dynamic process: thematic evolution grasped in the context of music of a 'forward-urging' metrical type. If, at the start of his String Quartet No. 2, Op. 10 (1907–8), Schoenberg 'begins before the beginning', this is because he extends the developmental character of his music from the motive to the phrase. By contrast, however complex the motivic transformations one might find in Webern, the latter is not 'a

[106] Keller, *Essays on Music*, 188–91; Mantzourani, 'Hans Keller', 54–5.

[107] Mantzourani, 'Hans Keller', 51–3.

contraster and developer', but a 'stater and varier'.[108] From a Schoenbergian perspective, the first movement of Skalkottas's Third Quartet contains a remarkable quantity of exact repetition.[109] As the above analysis of Ex. 6 shows, Skalkottas is a 'stater and varier' at the local level too. Bars 1–41 of the Third Quartet are a miniature theme and variations.

Mantzourani declares that Skalkottas's version of twelve-note technique was 'developed [...] before attending Schoenberg's masterclasses' and 'remained conceptually unchanged both during and after his studies with Schoenberg' (3–4). It is plain that Skalkottas used twelve-note technique in a manner different to that of his teacher. Yet Alsmeier is surely not incorrect to view the continuous transformation of material in the first movement of the Octet as Schoenbergian.[110] In contrast to the more relaxed idiom of the Third Quartet, the hectic atonal polyphony of the Octet could well be taken as Schoenbergian in origin too. Mantzourani courts the error of identifying these composer's styles with their means to generate pitches. Perhaps the title of her book is not quite right. The text is not, after all, primarily concerned with the twelve-note music of Nikos Skalkottas, but with the pitch-class manipulations he employed while composing it.

In Brian Alegant's similarly titled study of Skalkottas's contemporary Luigi Dallapiccola (1904–75), the problem reappears.[111] Alegant is concerned 'to demonstrate convincingly the influence of both Schoenberg and Webern' on Dallapiccola's compositional practice (9). He is particularly interested in 'cross partitions', whereby the order numbers of a series are arranged to form simultaneities, usually as tetrachords or trichords – $4^3$ or $3^4$ configurations, in Alegant's nomenclature – the vertical arrangement of which may be altered: Alegant refers to such re-orderings as '[s]lot-machine permutations' (21). 'It is likely that Dallapiccola's initial exposure to cross partitions came through the study of Schoenberg's twelve-tone works', Alegant suggests, 'especially the Op. 33a *Klavierstück*' (23). He immediately backtracks, commenting that 'it doesn't matter whether Dallapiccola came to cross partitions on his own or whether he appropriated them from Schoenberg, Berg, or another composer' (24). Yet this lack of certainty does not prevent Alegant from referring to Schoenberg whenever he comes across this technical device.

One doubts that Dallapiccola needed to analyse Op. 33a before turning his rows into chords. Nor indeed was Schoenberg the only composer to employ cross partitions before Dallapiccola. In the first edition of his book on Berg (which Dallapiccola had read by 1943), Willi Reich demonstrates how, in *Lulu* (1928–35), Berg derives the 'portrait harmonies' from the opera's principal series.[112] So why not

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[108] Keller, *Essays on Music*, 207–8, 186.

[109] Bars $76^1$–$82^2$ return almost unchanged at both bars $149^2$–$55^3$ and $18^4$–$90^1$; bars $19^4$–28 return unchanged at bars $168^4$–76; and the opening bars of the recapitulation ($121^4$–$9^3$) are surely closer to the presentation of the subordinate theme in the exposition (at $42^3$–$50^1$) than anything Schoenberg would have countenanced.

[110] Alsmeier, *Komponieren mit Tönen*, 99.

[111] Brian Alegant, *The Twelve-Tone Music of Luigi Dallapiccola* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010). £55. x + 326pp. ISBN 978–1–58046–325–6 (hardcover)

[112] Willi Reich, *Alban Berg. Mit Bergs eigenen Schriften und Beiträgen von Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno und Ernst Křenek* (Vienna, Leipzig and Zürich: Herbert Reichner Verlag, 1937), 112–13.

refer to cross partitions as Bergian? That Alegant hardly refers to Berg is surprising, given that commentators on Dallapiccola's music of the 1940s have so often emphasised the manner in which the Italian – like Berg – manages here to create a twelve-note idiom of quasi-diatonic euphony. For Alegant, committed to a set-theoretical approach, the traditional elements of Dallapiccola's music are necessarily uninteresting, even though it is evidently their presence that has brought his music of the 1940s a degree of recognition that the later work has conspicuously lacked. It does not matter to Alegant that while Dallapiccola's early twelve-note music sometimes sounds a bit like Berg and his work of the 1950s often a great deal like Webern, at any period of his career his music rarely sounds like Schoenberg at all. For a commentator who equates music to the techniques by which it is made, such issues may indeed be 'irrelevant' (190). Yet they can lead us to the essence of a composer's style.

In the course of a chapter (226–83) on Dallapiccola's *Parole di San Paolo* for medium voice and ensemble (1964), Alegant points to instances of 'formal parallelism' (250) and 'recapitulation' (257). The music at bars 32–9 returns largely unchanged at bars 51–7; bars 38–9 are anticipated at bars 17–20. '[S]uch literal repetition was for the most part strenuously avoided by the serial composers in the Second Viennese School', Alegant tells us (252). But as the student of Dallapiccola's music of the 1930s and 40s cannot fail to notice, strophic repetition is this composer's principal formal means. In Keller's terms, Dallapiccola is precisely not a Schoenbergian; like Webern, he is a 'stater and varier'. But unlike Webern – and unlike Skalkottas too – Dallapiccola is not a 'Viennese' composer in anything more than a superficial sense. The syntax of his music has French or Russian sources: Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky.

Consider Example 7, the second of the *Quattro liriche di Antonio Machado* (1948), discussed by Alegant in detail (24–8). The obvious analytical point here (which Alegant does not make) concerns the changing relationship of voice and piano. The first eleven bars present a refrain/verse structure: the piano has the 'refrain', fashioned from two $4^3$ cross partitions ($P_0$ and $R_6$).[113] Bars 1–4 are followed by a 'verse' consisting of an unaccompanied vocal line that slowly describes a melodic arch. Characteristically, Dallapiccola proceeds to a repetition of these materials. At bars 51–2, we hear a transposition down a tone of bars 43–4 (bar 51 has the rhythm of bar 45 rather than that of bar 43); the imitative lines of what Alegant calls the following 'stretto' relate closely to the contour of bars 47–9, though this music has now migrated from voice to piano.

The closing beats of the stretto (bar $54^{1-3}$) initiate a passage of ambiguity. The second repetition of the refrain/verse structure (the third of the song's four strophes) is disguised. The harmonies of bars 43–6 return at bars $54^3$–5, transposed from the succession $P_0$–$R_6$ to $P_5$–$R_{11}$. But the rhythmic character of bars 43–6 and 51–2 is lost, along with their melodic contour (transformed by 'slot machine' permutation). Meanwhile, the voice has not waited for the piano to finish, entering with a line that inverts the arch of bars 47–50. After the formal clarity of bars 43–53, the sense of bars 54–6 appears less certain. One landmark is the piano's descent at bars $55^4$–6 (prepared by the repeated $g^3$

[113] At $P_0$, the row used in this song is: C, D♭, E♮, G♭, G♮, A, B♭, B♮, D♮, E♭, F, G♯. Alegant points out that the cross partition employed at bars 1–2 is unusual in that 'the contiguous notes of the row appear horizontally instead of vertically' (24).

at bar $55^{2-3}$), which echoes the vocal descent of bar 54. But the vocal line at 'Después soñé que' presents an unfamiliar contour, unsettling any sense of recognition at this point. Then suddenly, at bar 57, everything locks into place. The refrain and verse, introduced separately and then unstably combined, now find equilibrium. The piano's music has not regained the rhythms of bars 43–6 or 51–2, but the pitches, and above all the melodic contour, of bar 57 are those of bars 43–4. The voice, too, returns to its staring point: as at bars 47–51, $P_{11}$ is followed by $I_6$.

Alegant refers to 'a three-part, a–b–a design, with four-voiced homophonic passages flanking a brief canonic episode' (24). The strophic form is missed. His handling of the song's pitch structure is perfectly efficient. But in this context, efficiency is not enough. It is one thing to isolate and compare cross partitions; the analyst's concern must surely be to explain their arrangement. An unwillingness to rise to the level of interpretation marks Alegant's study as a whole. In the chapter on Dallapiccola's octatonic practice (109–54), the question of how octatonicism might interact with other kinds of harmony is scarcely even broached. Alegant may strew his text with avowals of enthusiasm. Ex. 7, for instance, is 'exquisitely constructed and expressive' (24). But in order to elucidate this music's expressivity, Alegant would need to leave behind his theoretical safety-net and comment on the song's temporal progress from the perspective of his musical experience: something he is unwilling to do. He does possess a term for those aspects of Dallapiccola's music currently unreachable via music-theoretical concepts; this is the strikingly static 'soundscape'. Alegant finds in Ex. 7 'an atmosphere that is intimate and delicate, tentative and weightless' (27). Up to a point, this is appropriate. Yet Dallapiccola's is not 'texture' music. There is more to Ex. 7 than 'soundscape' or 'atmosphere'.

The Italian is above all a vocal composer, a setter of words. Alegant gives and texts and translations for the works he tackles; he is otherwise 'happy to let others speak on the cultural, literary, metaphysical [and] philosophical [...] influences that shaped Dallapiccola's music' (2). To imagine that one might give an adequate interpretation of Ex. 7 on the basis of a reading of its text as 'a dream-inspired fantasy' (24) is naïve. Alegant has an odd idea of the Machado songs in general. His observation that their 'ethereal lyricism' stands opposed to the 'stridency and intensity' of Dallapiccola's music elsewhere (54), suggests that he may not have listened to the cycle all the way through. The third song is a thoroughly strident and intense outburst, setting one of the poems Machado wrote after the death of his teenage bride Leonor:

> Señor, ya me arrancaste lo que yo más quería.
> Oye otra vez, Dios mío, mi corazón clamar.
> Tu voluntad se hizo, Señor, contra la mía.
> Señor, ya estamos solos mi corazón y el mar.
>
> [Lord, you took from me what I loved best. / Hear once again, my God, my heart cry out. / Your will was done, Lord, against mine. / Lord, we are alone my heart and the sea.]

This is the core of the cycle. The other poems (not contiguous in their original poetic context) are arranged by the composer to form a progression that, as the late Roman Vlad long ago noted, stands

in close relation to the religious crisis evinced by the libretto of *Il prigioniero*.[114] As Alegant notices too, the opera and the song cycle 'share many structural and sonic characteristics' (132). The joyous greeting to spring in first song relates poetically and musically to the opening of Scene 4.[115] After the catastrophe registered in the third song, however, the union of God and nature in the '¡Aleluyas blancas / de los zarzales floridos!' [White alleluias / of the brambles in flower!] can no longer be celebrated. To a slow transformation of the material of the first song, marked 'con amarezza' ('with bitterness'), Dallapiccola sets the following couplet: 'La primavera ha venido / Nadie sabe cómo ha sido' [Spring has come / Nobody knows how it happened].

The second song, placed between joy and catastrophe, is uneasy in tone:

> Ayer soñé que veía
> a Dios y que a Dios hablaba:
> y soñé que Dios me oía...
> Después soñé que soñaba.
>
> [Yesterday I dreamed that I saw / God and that I spoke to God: / and I dreamed that God heard me. / Since then I dreamed that I was dreaming.]

The focus of the poem is the third line, marked musically by the singer's extraordinary ascent to a *pianississimo* $c\flat^3$. The poet relates a moment of direct communication with God, of ecstatic temporal suspension, corresponding to the moment in Dallapiccola's song when, as we saw, the musical sense seems to come undone. Yet it was only a dream; or rather, a dream within a dream. The angular setting of 'Después' already starts to break the spell, while the recapitulation at bar 57, with its sudden clarification of texture, can now be seen as a return to reality, a disillusionment.

Alegant prefers the post-1950 compositions, especially those from the years 1956–60, which 'arguably represent the most fertile period in Dallapiccola's development' (47). The periodization derives from the composer, who observed how on each occasion that he composed a tonal piece based on the music of an earlier Italian composer – *Sonatina canonica* for piano (1942–3), *Tartiniana* for violin and orchestra (1951) and *Tartiniana seconda* for violin and piano (1955–6) – he subsequently 'took a noteworthy step forward along the path of twelve-tone music' (12). As Alegant points out, the boundaries between 'phases' are not watertight; nor is there any tonal composition to usher in the period 1960–72. And his characterizations of phases one, two and four would be more convincing if they paid decent attention to Dallapiccola's large-scale compositions of these years. The two hours of his final opera *Ulisse* (Berlin, 1968) are discussed on just a handful of pages, while *Job*, the 35-minute *sacra rappresentazione* of 1950, is hardly mentioned. Alegant's contention that the works of the second phase are primarily miniatures (46, 86) neglects the 30-minute *Canti di liberazione* for chorus and orchestra (1951–5), the pre-eminent achievement of the early 1950s. His

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[114] See Roman Vlad, *Luigi Dallapiccola*, trans. Cynthia Jolly (Milan: Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, 1957), 40–1. For the poems, see Antonio Machado, *Poesie*, ed. and trans. Oreste Macrí (Milan: Il Balcone, 1947), 134, 162, 194. (This is the edition in Dallapiccola's library.)

[115] See the clarinet at bars $886^3$–$7^1$ of the opera, where the Prisoner, in his illusory escape, breathes a 'spring air'.

treatment of the second phase adds little to the accounts of Babbitt, David Lewin and Thomas DeLio.[116]

It is no coincidence that the compositions of the third phase – *An Mathilde* for female voice and orchestra (1954), *Cinque canti* for baritone and eight instruments (1956), *Concerto per la notte di natale dell'anno 1956* for soprano and chamber orchestra (1957–8), *Requiescant* for mixed chorus, children's chorus and orchestra (1957–8) and *Dialoghi* for cello and orchestra (1959–60) – should be at once the most unfamiliar of Dallapiccola's post-war music and that with which Alegant is happiest.[117] For it was at this point that the composer advanced (if that is the right word) furthest into 'rigor and systematization' (74), involving the parameters of duration and instrumentation, as well as pitch. Already in the *Goethe-Lieder* for mezzo soprano and three clarinets (1952–3), Dallapiccola had signalled a break with his previous idiom. As he put it a decade later,

> I consider the *Goethe-Lieder* a work of extreme importance in my development. For the first time I was able, and with much clarity, I believe, to write a metrical notation which corresponded exactly to what I had in mind.[118]

Did the composer genuinely believe that, before 1952, notation had impeded the communication of his ideas? As Alegant does not make properly clear (38, 88), the 'floating rhythm' of Example 8, the opening of the seventh and last of the *Goethe-Lieder*, is achieved not by an avoidance of downbeats (for poetic stress is aligned with the bar lines), but rather, first, by the avoidance of metrical regularity in the vocal line, and second, by the placement in the clarinets of various multiplications of the durations of the voice's opening crotchets (by 0.75, 0.3˙, 0.5, 0.6˙ and 0.5) such as to obscure any hierarchical superiority of the notated metre. It is hard to imagine the complexity of Ex. 8 merely corresponding to music pre-existent in the composer's mind. Perhaps Dallapiccola really meant the opposite of what he said, namely that in the *Goethe-Lieder*, he found himself, for the first time, not struggling to find a metrical notation for music he could already hear, but writing music unimaginable in its details prior to notation.

He was doubtless pleased by the look of Ex. 8, which is more complex than it needs to be (see especially the B♭ clarinet in bars 4–5). More charitably, what Dallapiccola 'had in mind' could be interpreted as an approximation to the 'internal rhythm' that from the first, as Alegant points out (49), he had admired in Webern. The debt to Webern in Ex. 8, with respect to pitch construction (in

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[116] See Stephen Peles (ed.), *The Collected Essays of Milton Babbitt* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 64–5; Babbitt, *Words about Music*, 38–41; David Lewin, *Musical Form and Transformation: Four Analytic Essays* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 1–15; Thomas DeLio, 'A Proliferation of Canons: Luigi Dallapiccola's "Goethe Lieder No. 2"', *Perspectives of New Music*, 23/2 (1985), 186–95.

[117] Of these, *Requiescant* has never been recorded commercially. Alegant suggests that *An Mathilde* has not either (155, 225), yet a 1955 performance by Magda László and the South West German Radio Orchestra under Hans Rosbaud was in fact issued (on Deutsche Grammophon 0629 031 (1978)) as the fifth of five LPs accompanying the commemorative volume for Heinrich Strobel, *'Verehrter Meister, lieber Freund'. Begegnungen mit Komponisten unserer Zeit*, ed. Ingeborg Schatz (Stuttgart and Zürich: Belser Verlag, 1977).

[118] Hans Nathan (ed.), 'Luigi Dallapiccola: Fragments from Conversations', *Music Review*, 27/4 (1966), 302.

the derived aggregate: G♮, A♭, G♭; A♮, B♮, B♭; C♮, D♮, C♯; E♮, F♮, E♭), rhythmic/metric style and scoring, is unmistakable. In the historically richest section of his book (47–83), Alegant shows how, armed with the analyses of René Leibowitz,[119] Dallapiccola created his own versions of Webern's 'soundscapes', employing many of the same technical means: RI-symmetrical rows, palindromes, derivation, four-voice arrays, and – most obviously – canons. These elements are particularly prominent in Alegant's favourite pieces of the later 1950s, of which he gives a thorough account, including a technical description (not properly an analysis) of the whole of *An Mathilde* (155–225). As with Mantzourani on Skalkottas, so with Alegant on Dallapiccola: this book will be an indispensable first port of call for anyone working on this repertory in future. It is, however, only intermittently musical, and then weakly so.

## IV

Alegant is concerned that readers should be able to hear the pitch-class invariances he uncovers. A '[s]ummary of tetrachordal ideas' in *Parole di San Paolo* is offered 'as an ear-training aid' (281, 309n38). Appreciation of musical sense is one thing; aural skills another, we might respond. But perhaps the situation is not quite so clear-cut. In Schoenberg or Skalkottas, a traditionally conceived 'Austro-German' syntax finds itself stretched to breaking-point; the necessity to explain that this syntax nevertheless constitutes the substance of their work – Schoenberg's 'what it *is*' rather than 'how it is *done*' – only indicates how poorly this repertory has been served in English.[120] If the same might be said with regard to the 'French' syntax of Dallapiccola's music of the 1940s, his work of the 1950s and 60s is another matter. Already in late Webern, Adorno thought, a fetishism of the row had led to the extinction of musical meaning.[121] If the work of Webern and the post-Webernians is indeed devoid of musical sense, one might think its employment for the purposes of ear-training perfectly appropriate. But Adorno surely exaggerates. If Alegant's methodology makes it impossible for him to account for the expressivity he finds in Dallapiccola's music of the 1950s and 60s, it is a sign not that this expressivity is non-existent, but that we need to look elsewhere for an interpretative approach. Certainly the intellectual framework of Romano Pezzati's full-length study of *Ulisse* could hardly contrast more vividly with that of Anglo-American positivism.[122]

In the final lines of his libretto, Dallapiccola has Ulisse pronounce an inversion of Machado's despair: not 'Señor, ya estamos solos mi corazón y el mar', but 'Signore! / Non più soli sono il mio cuore e il mare' (see Example 9). The opera he regarded as the *summa* of his achievement was intended to set

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[119] See René Leibowitz, *Schoenberg and His School: The Contemporary Stage of the Language of Music*, trans. Dika Newlin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 187–255.

[120] See Arnold Schoenberg, *Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (London and Boston: Faber, 1964), 164.

[121] Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, 86–7.

[122] Romano Pezzati, *La memoria di Ulisse. Studi sull'Ulisse di Luigi Dallapiccola*, ed. Mario Ruffini (Milan: Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, 2008). xxvi + 374 pp. €25.00. ISBN 978–88–900691–3–0 (pb).

to rest the anguish of his earlier work. 'I should like some day, after all the question marks – mine and others', to succeed in expressing a "certainty"', he wrote.[123] Following Dante in Canto XXVI of *Inferno*, Dallapiccola sets his final scene (an Epilogue) not on Ithaca but at sea. Ever unsatisfied, Ulisse has set sail once more: we see him alone in a small boat under the stars. His anguished monologue reaches its climax in the overt expression of a quest for meaning: 'Trovar potessi il nome, pronunciar la parola / che chiarisca a me stesso così ansioso cercare; / [...] Se una voce rompesse il silenzio, il mistero...' [If I could but find the name, speak the word that would explain to me this anxious searching; / [...] If a voice would but break the silence, the mystery...]. All of a sudden, a voice does speak, or so we are to believe, for Ulisse experiences an epiphany: 'Lord! / No longer are they alone, my heart and the sea.'

Most telling in Ex. 9 is not, perhaps, the moment when God 'speaks' (bars $1023–5^1$), but what happens immediately before and after the passage marked 'come una parentesi'. As Dietrich Kämper was the first to reveal, Dallapiccola constructed the opera from ten series, all of which (as the composer noted) employ permutations of the same two hexachords.[124] At bars $1025^3–6^2$, the strings state the 'ur-series' 'Mare I' at $I_0$, as $6^2$ cross-partitions: C♮, C♯, B♮, B♭, E♮, F♮; G♯, A♮, F♯, G♮, D♯, D♮. The third chord repeats the pitch-class content of the first, initiating a statement of $I_0$ that is completed in a disordered manner by Ulisse and the orchestra in bars $1029^3–30^1$. Ulisse's pitches in these two bars are simultaneously the second trichord of the 'Calypso' row at $I_1$: C♯, A♮, C♮; F♯, A♭, G♮; B♮, E♮, F♮; E♮, D♮, D♯. He sings only the second and fourth trichords (at bars $1029^3–30^1$ and $1031^2–3$); the others are heard in the orchestra.[125] The six $6^2$ cross-partitions at bars $1030^2–3$ have been identified by Anthony Sellors as, successively: two statements of 'Mare III' at $I_0$ (C♮, B♮, F♮, F♯, G♯, G♮; D♮, C♯, E♭, E♮, B♭, A♮) and one at $P_1$, a statement of 'Mare I' at $I_6$, and finally statements of 'Mare III' at $P_2$ and $P_1$.[126] At bars 1034–5, solo instruments outline 'Mare I' at $R_5$. And in bars 1036–7, Dallapiccola combines a twelve-note collection derived from a (014) trichord (lower system) with its retrograde (middle system).[127]

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[123] Rudy Shackelford (ed., trans.), *Dallapiccola on Opera* (London: Toccata Press, 1987), 104.

[124] See Dietrich Kämper, *Gefangenschaft und Freiheit: Leben und Werk des Komponisten Luigi Dallapiccola* (Cologne: Gitarre + Laute, 1984), 159–60; Hans Nathan, 'Dallapiccola's Working Methods', *Perspectives of New Music*, 15/1 (1977), 46. As Alegant points out (84–6), there is in fact just one hexachord in play in all ten series, Forte's 6–5 [012367].

[125] At bars $1025^3–6$, order numbers 1–3 are the melody notes in the strings' hexachords; in bar 1030, order numbers 7–9 are heard at $b♮^2$, $e♮^2$ and $f♮^2$.

[126] Anthony Sellors, '*Expressing a Certainty*: Musical and Poetic Imagery in Dallapiccola's *Ulisse*', 2 vols. (doctoral dissertation: University of London, 2001), ii, 569.

[127] B♮ is omitted from the retrograde's second trichord and E♮ displaced from the third trichord to join the fourth.

This kind of note-counting can be carried out for the opera as a whole.[128] But it is essentially pointless, since as Sellors remarks, 'it is not the *series* which assert themselves in *Ulisse*, but the *shapes* (or motives) which Dallapiccola constructs from them'.[129] The chords at bars $1025^3$–$6^2$ are also the opera's opening music. Their combination with Ulisse's vocal line and its accompaniment at bars $1029^3$–33 is directly foreshadowed in the Prologue at bars $72^5$–7. The music of bars 1034–5 occurs frequently. And the final two bars are familiar too.[130] It might seem standard practice for a composer to round off a large-scale work by returning to some of its most prominent materials. Yet Ulisse has just experienced the revelation of divine presence. Dallapiccola's music carries on as if nothing had happened.

Pezzati's solution to this problem involves comparisons between Ulisse's final vocal line and Calypso's melody (her row at $I_8$ and $P_6$), as she sings it in the Prologue at bars $11^4$–$16^1$ and $80^3$–$4^1$ (Examples 10a and 10b). Abandoned on the island of Ogygia, Calypso addresses her absent lover by way of Machado: 'Son soli, un'altra volta, il tuo cuore e il mare' [They are alone, once more, your heart and the sea]. Pezzati notes the 'metrical irregularity' at 'mare' in Ex. 10a, and suggests that this 'rhythmic caesura' remains unresolved until the 6/4 bar of Ex. 10b. In the latter case, 'cuore' and 'mare' (for Pezzati symbolic, respectively, of Ulisse's conscious and unconscious mind) are bound together in a single phrase; in Ex. 10a, they were separated. In Ex. 9 'mare' is once again distinct from 'cuore' (which is spoken rather than sung). Once again there is a 'caesura', a 'suspension of time', of the kind 'implicit in a dramatic conception in which, amid the folds of the chronological succession of facts, the way to a possible now of revelation can open at any time' (275–6).

Pezzati's book is introduced by Mario Ruffini as 'unprecedented' in its detailed analytical attention to a single opera, and 'without equal in the field of dodecaphonic studies' (xvii, xviii). Such pronouncements indicate an ignorance of musicological literature in general and that on *Ulisse* in particular.[131] Pezzati is in fact an unsteady guide to Dallapiccola's twelve-note technique. Especially disappointing is his refusal to identify the series in use at bars $2^3$–6 of the Prologue. '[N]o original, determined series can appear at this opening, whose pluri-directional and multidimensional structure admits no definition of the web of the dodecaphonic fabric', he writes (81), of a passage that deploys 'Mare I' at $P_8$, $R_5$, $RI_5$ and $I_{10}$. The deployment takes the form of bar 1034 in Ex. 9 (identical to bar 4 of the Prologue). Pitches overlap, to be sure, but they appear one at a time and in strict order.

Later on, Pezzati correctly writes out the pitch-class succession of bars $2^3$–$4^1$ of the Prologue (G♯, G♮, A♮, B♭, E♮, E♭; C♮, B♮, D♮, D♭, F♮, G♭), yet still does not identify it. Instead he sows confusion (309–11)

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[128] See Sellors, '*Expressing a Certainty*', ii, 621–69.

[129] *Ibid.*, i, 83.

[130] Sellors calls the music of bars 1034–5 in Ex. 9 the 'wave motive', and that of the final two bars, the '*mortale* motive'. On the latter, see *ibid.*, i, 97–101.

[131] In addition to Sellors' dissertation, see Julia van Hees, *Luigi Dallapiccolas Bühnenwerk* Ulisse. *Untersuchungen zu Werk und Werkgenese* (Kassel: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1994).

by means of an unhelpful derivation of this series ('Mare I' at $P_8$) from its presentation as two $6^2$ cross partitions (at $I_0$) in bars 1–2. If the opera's opening chord is understood as a verticalization of the ordered hexachord C♮, C♯, B♮, B♭, E♮, F♮, then its second chord may be viewed as a transposed inversion of the first: G♮, F♯, A♭, A♮, E♭, D♮. Thus while the first hexachord of $P_8$ (G♯, G♮, A♮, B♭, E♮, E♭) appears as a transposition up a semitone of the opera's second chord, the second hexachord of $P_8$ appears to involve a re-ordering of the first chord, a transposition up a semitone of the succession B♮, B♭, C♯, C♮, E♮, F♮ (not C♮, C♯, B♮, B♭, E♮, F♮). Pezzati relies on the fact that the pitch-class content (but not the order) of the two hexachords of 'Mare I' is identical under inversion ($P_0$, 1–6 = $I_5$, 7–12). It would have been better simply to spell this out.

His account of the dodecaphony of *Ulisse* as existing on two levels – on the one hand, as a 'continuum'; on the other, as motives, in particular three trichordal 'fundamental figures' (100) – is misleading. Except at the level of an abstraction, twelve-note technique provides no more of a 'continuum' in this work than it does in any other. The reader of Sellors' dissertation will learn to recognise upwards of fifty motives in *Ulisse*. The effect is a hyper-Wagnerianism, for 'while Wagner's motives are ever-present in the musical texture, they cannot be used to explain *every note* found in it.'[132] Pezzati recognises a few of these motives (101–5), but his concentration on the three trichordal figures tends to obscure the most distinctive feature of the opera's formal construction. Nor is his handling of the figures appropriate, for he hypostatizes their significance in a manner that does not sufficiently discriminate between moments when the trichords are leitmotivic and when they are not.

Pezzati labels the chromatic trichord Dallapiccola takes over from the *Goethe-Lieder* (see Ex. 8) 'Ulysses/Nobody', the major/minor thirds that open Calypso's melody 'Calypso/Ulysses', and the 'Viennese' triad of superimposed augmented and perfect fourths 'Ithaca/not-Ithaca'. Of these identifications, the third is most problematic. This sonority is ubiquitous in *Ulisse*. For Sellors, it 'does not carry any particular symbolism: it is effectively the basic harmonic unit of the entire opera'.[133] What makes Pezzati's identification of the Viennese triad with Ithaca's presence and non-presence so unconvincing is not just the interpretative knots into which he ties himself (on which it would be kinder not to dwell) but, first, that Dallapiccola appears to have composed a quite different 'Ithaca' motive, and second, that Pezzati's 'Ithaca/not-Ithaca' chord (or rather, two of them, superimposed) does in fact gain an evident leitmotivic content, but in reference not to Ithaca but to Ulisse himself.[134]

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[132] Sellors, '*Expressing a Certainty*', i, 55.

[133] *Ibid.*, i, 92.

[134] For leitmotivic instances of this 'name-chord', always at the same pitch level, see the Prologue on the final quaver of bar 56; Act I, bars 267, 302 and 799; and Act II, bars 510 and 856–8. For the 'Ithaca' motive, see Act 1, bars 812–13 and 1070–1.

## V

If Pezzati's book is worth bothering with, it is for its idiosyncratic concern with the 'sound' of Dallapiccola's music. *Ulisse* belongs to a particular strand in modernist opera, running from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (Munich, 1865) to Nono's *Prometeo* (Venice, 1984), characterised by its 'internal' character. In these works, the real drama takes place in the orchestra pit (98–9). Such Schopenhauerianism does violence to Dallapiccola's score, which is frequently illustrative of the stage action in a traditionally mimetic manner.[135] For those listeners who find the dramatic and musical propulsion of Act II a relief after the static tableaux of Act I, Pezzati's distaste for the conventionally operatic elements in *Ulisse* will appear perverse. But one cannot watch *Ulisse* as if it were a *melodramma*, Pezzati insists (183). Twelve-note technique is properly a search for 'a primordial and undifferentiated structure of sound [...] on which memory can draw freely, without citing or imitating passages or styles traceable to works of the past' (252–3).

In *Ulisse*, this search is at once musical and religious. The theology of Dallapiccola's opera derives from Saint Augustine, for whom there are, of course, five physical senses, but also five 'spiritual' ones. Ulisse searches for meaning in the physical world. 'Guardare, meravigliarsi, e tornar a guardare' [To look, to wonder, and to return to looking] runs the refrain of Calpyso's opening scene. But 'visual scrutiny [...] can never find appeasement in an understanding of the truth', Pezzati observes (132). When God spoke to Augustine, it was via a 'spiritual' sense of hearing. For God is 'within'.[136] At bars 1023–5[1] in Ex. 9, Ulisse stands outside narrative and representation. In an ecstatic moment of listening, 'the memory of the unspeakable Word' is revealed to him (7). Pezzati sets himself the analytical task of demonstrating that this g♯[1], the musical sign of the 'absent-present word' (269), was always already sounding throughout the opera. Dallapiccola indicates something of the kind when he arranges the instrumental cut-off points at bars 1023–5[1] (meant to be heard as *sforzandi*) in the form of the opera's *Hauptrhythmus*. In terms of its rhythmic profile, the g♯[1] has been present since bars 92–3 of Act I. But Pezzati goes further, asserting that the pitch classes F♯, G♯ and C♯ form 'a spatio-temporal conjunction' on the basis of which 'the serial framework of the entire opera is generated' (81).

It is possible that Dallapiccola intended F♯ as the 'symbolic note of the entire opera' (177). But too often Pezzati's attempts to find significance in this pitch, along with C♯ and G♯, appear arbitrary. In fact, the interpretative key to the opera is staring him in the face, though he fails to see it. From bar 943 of Act II onwards (the Epilogue begins at bar 912), Dallapiccola organises an apotheosis of the kind of mosaic construction employed throughout the work. The material consists now not only of motives already used in *Ulisse* but also of quotations from Dallapiccola's previous compositions. A self-identification with the protagonist is a feature of all the composer's stage works. But this appeal to past musical deeds also finds a parallel in Augustine. The saint too is looking for God, whose

[135] See Massimo Mila, 'L'"Ulisse". Opera a due dimensioni', in Fiamma Nicolodi (ed.), *Luigi Dallapiccola. Saggi, testimonianze, carteggio, biografia e bibliografia* (Milan: Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, 1975), 31–41.

[136] Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 201.

residence, he concludes, is in memory. But where? 'There is no place, whether we go backwards or forwards; there can be no question of place.' God is found in memory insofar as He transcends it.[137]

Unhappily, Pezzati is no steadier a guide to Dallapiccola's self-quotations than to his twelve-note technique. The references to the *Cinque canti* at bars 955–7 and 966–9[1] are missed; nor does Pezzati recognise the quotations from the third of the *Canti di liberazione* at bars 989[2]–97, 1008[2]–15 and 1026–9[2]. The last of these – marked 'come una parantesi' in Ex. 9 – is especially significant. Missing from the original 1968 edition of vocal score (the version with German translation), these bars were inserted in the full score of 1971; they appear in the 1970 vocal score (with English translation) only in an appendix. Their significance lies in the text set at this point in the *Canti di liberazione*. 'Vocasti et clamasti': 'You called and cried out loud', Augustine writes, 'and shattered my deafness'.[138] It is a secret reference: Augustine's words are not heard in *Ulisse*. But secrecy is the point. There is no need for Pezzati's F♯–G♯–C♯ framework, nor for his desperate attempt to suggest that, following Ulisse's epiphany, the final moments of the opera occupy 'another time' (333). From a musico-dramatic perspective, these bars are an anti-climax. It is indeed as if nothing has happened. For if we have witnessed Ulisse's moment of revelation, we have not ourselves participated in it. A strictly transcendent event, it occurs within Ulisse and nowhere else. As Augustine reminds us, citing I Corinthians 2:11, 'no one "knows what is going on in a person except the human spirit which is within".'[139]

Pezzati employs Dallapiccola's declaration that the 'unity of the musical discourse' in a twelve-note composition will always be 'an interior matter' as confirmation that the basis of his creativity was 'that deep and hidden place in man where the sense of beauty and the voice of God are already present and operative' (285). Dallapiccola's music must be grasped as sound, 'leaving aside its serial elaboration' (207). Yet sound always wants to achieve meaning: it seeks words. At the same time, words seek their 'origin', their theological 'true meaning (the name)' in sound (19–20). 'While in Monteverdi voice and instruments converge unambiguously in the sounding articulation of the words [...], such that words may assimilate sound (*seconda prattica*), in Dallapiccola, instead, a reciprocal movement occurs: it is words that arise from sound – from the same sound – which belongs to them originally and diffuses itself in the melodic movement and sounding space' (32).

There is a place for mysticism in the analysis of *Ulisse*. But Pezzati's notion of a 'pure signification', an 'original space of sound, intermediate between [...] musical structure and linguistic structure', which 'cannot be observed by logical comprehension, but rather heard in the movement of the soul' (35), offers little by way of a practical guide to a far from straightforward opera. Sellors declares that the motivic mosaic of *Ulisse* 'does not *sound* like a string of fragments, any more than a piece of Mozart does'.[140] This too appears an evasion. At a smaller scale, Sellors can be less confident. Of Ex.

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[137] *Ibid.*

[138] *Ibid.*

[139] *Ibid.*, 180.

[140] Sellors, '*Expressing a Certainty*', i, 85.

10a, he writes, the 'four chords [...] are meaningless without the co-ordinating impulse provided by the melody'. And further: 'played by themselves, the chords do not seem to generate any sense of forward motion. What forward motion there is is generated by the vocal line'.[141] In the absence of vocal melody, passages like Ex. 10a would teeter on the edge of a 'sound' quite different to Pezzati's: that of Scruton's unmusical succession.

So how is Ex. 10a musical? We can dismiss Pezzati's talk of a 'discord' between Calypso's melody and the previous music, due to an alleged lack of a direct twelve-note link, along with his attempt to interpret the melody in terms of his F♯–G♯–C♯ structure (90–1).[142] But his earlier comments about the 'schizophrenic' character of most analyses of twelve-note vocal music, in which 'humanistic and spiritual' concerns are incongruously superimposed upon technical observations, are well taken (22). As Pezzati recognises, verbal and musical sense in Ex. 10a is inextricable. The melody is divided at bar $13^3$ by the rest, by the following change in register and by the manner in which the falling semitone at 'volta' lowers the tension of the second segment of the first phrase. In bars $13^3$–$16^1$ the similarly appoggiatura-like semitone at 'cuore' rises rather than falls; more generally these bars are marked by a broadening, 'as if the images of "heart" and "sea", despite their separation due to the rests, or precisely on that account, might stand out in another space-time capable of interrupting the temporal succession expressed by "once more"' (91).

The orchestra of *Ulisse* is no mere accompaniment, but 'an extension of the melodic field, its reverberation in sonic space' (95). Pezzati notes some invariance in Ex. 10a: between Calypso's opening trichord and the accompanying $b♭^1$, $d♮$ and $d♭^1$ in viola, double bass and horn (both (014)), and between the vocal line at 'il tuo cuore' and the accompanying chord (both (0123)) (97). He might have mentioned the ascent in the oboe, $e♭^2$–$e♮^2$–$f♯^2$, which (*pace* Sellors) does lend these chords a certain direction. And finally, there is the issue of metre. If the melodic pitches of Ex. 10a possess Scruton's 'tone', this is down to the poetry as much as to the music. The 'broadening' of the second phrase is not only rhythmic, but results from a weakening of the upbeat/downbeat distinction clearly projected at 'Son soli' (note the *tenuto* accent) and 'un'altra volta'. Though the phrase 'e il mare' is appropriately notated in terms of poetic stress, the loss of the minim *tactus* as a result of the crotchet quintuplets causes the word 'mare' to stand apart temporally, much as Pezzati suggests.

The sea is a constant point of reference in this opera. With regard to its symbolic value, a clue is given by the sombre colour of the muted brass in the chord that enters at bar $13^4$. In the Spanish poetic tradition, to which Machado surely responds, the meaning is evident:

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[141] *Ibid.*, i, 196.

[142] A twelve-note link is not hard to find. The trichord $a♮$–$a♭^1$–$c♮^2$ at bar 11 is at once order numbers 1–3 of the statement of the 'Calypso' row at $P_8$ ($A♭$, $C♮$, $A♮$, $E♭$, $D♮$, $D♭$; $B♭$, $B♮$, $E♮$, $F♮$, $G♮$, $F♯$) that accompanies the singer's version of the same row at $I_8$, and the final (014) trichord of a derived set, explicated above in relation to bars 1036–7 in Ex. 9.

Nuestras vidas son los ríos
que van a dar en la mar,
qu'es el morir

[Our lives are the rivers/ that run into to the sea, / which is death].

Later in her scene (bars 65–8), Calypso will ask: 'Che bramare può l'uomo se non sfuggir la morte?' [For what can man yearn but to escape death?].[143] But already at bar 15 of this opera, poetry and music combine to give a sense of the existential abyss that is the source of Ulisse's anguish.

[143] Again the source is Spanish: Dallapiccola is paraphrasing Unamuno. See Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations*, trans. Anthony Kerrigan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 9. The three lines of poetry are from the *Coplas por la muerte de su padre* of Jorge Manrique (c. 1440–79).